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TO

THE DEAR MEMORY OF

J. W. & L. W.

TO WHOSE CHRISTIAN LIFE,

TEACHING AND PRAYERS I OWE

UNDER GOD IN CHRIST

ALL THAT IS OF ANY GOOD IN ME

Christ's Gospel of the Eternal and the Divine Manifestation in Christ

BY THE

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AUTHOR OF "THE SPIRIT AND THE INCARNATION"
"CHRISTIAN THEISM AND A SPIRITUAL MONISM"
"CHRIST THE CREATIVE IDEAL" ETC. ETC.

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PREFACE

I EXPECT that this book, if noticed at all, will in some portions of it meet with much adverse criticism. But I believe what I have written to be necessary, and it is certainly meant to help in the service of God and the world's salvation. Its formal deficiencies are many. But to one who has reached fourscore years, I hope something may be forgiven. I have kept the MS. long beside me, seeking to keep abreast of the literature on the subject—which is not small in quantity—and subjecting what I had written to frequent revision. I felt that I could go on in this way indefinitely, for I am conscious that my work is incomplete; but advancing years, and the uncertainties of life, made me call a halt, in the hope that if these pages contain any suggestions of value, younger and abler men will take them up and work them out more effectively. I have written not merely for clergymen and theological students, but for the lay reader. I have sought, *inter alia*, to show that we have in Jesus a "credible Christ" and a real revelation of God in Man.

My best thanks are due to the Rev. Henry Wallace and my daughter for their help generally.

W. L. W.

LOCHANBRAE, MAMBEG,
GARELOCH, *September* 1925.

INTRODUCTORY

THAT the World is greatly in need of Salvation is widely felt, and that it is to Christianity we must look for the Power that can effect it. It is only as God Himself finds entrance into the world's life that it can be uplifted and saved, and this entrance can only be into the hearts of men. This presence and reign of God—of that which God *is*—in men is practical Christianity, to which all that belongs to Creed and Doctrine and Church only ministers.

Many are therefore earnestly devoting themselves as their chief concern to " the extension and ultimate establishment on the earth of the Kingdom of God," understanding that this was what Jesus meant by His preaching of the Kingdom and prayer for its coming. This is certainly a Christian Ideal worth living and labouring for. But yet there seems to be something lacking. Viewing the world as it is to-day, it is still, after all these centuries of Christianity, very far from being anything like a Kingdom of God. And while increasing earnestness is manifest on the part of many Christians, and a new hopefulness is finding expression, multitudes are wholly uninfluenced, and an increasing number ceasing to believe in Christianity, or unable to accept it as it is put before them.

For long I entertained the common belief respecting

the Kingdom. But continued study of the Gospels has convinced me (with many others) that the commonly accepted conception of the Kingdom of God is not that which Jesus preached as His Gospel, but that the Kingdom, while it was a present spiritual Kingdom in the heart, and while membership in it was to be attained here and now, was essentially a Kingdom of the Future belonging to the Unseen and Eternal, a Kingdom which God had from eternity prepared for His children. It was first offered to Israel as His people; but its scope embraces all mankind. Hence the prayer, "Thy Kingdom come," so constantly offered by us to-day, has lost its meaning, for it is certainly not with God that the hindrance to His own rule on earth lies. The Kingdom that Jesus preached as "at hand" was one that should come from God, in which His people should find deliverance from all the evils they suffered and eternal Good—"eternal Life." It was a Kingdom that had been promised through a long succession of God-inspired prophets, and the expectation of its coming had been kept alive by the reading of the Scriptures, religious services, and by many Apocalyptists. The Gospel of Jesus was *that this Kingdom was real, and that it was soon to appear.*

This Kingdom did not come to earth in the form in which Jesus preached it. Yet many students of the Gospels are to-day constrained to believe that this was really the preaching of Christ, and doubtless, as unbiassed study of the Gospels continues, many more will be led to the same conclusion. *How then are we*

to think of Christ and His Gospel? This is one sufficient reason for dealing seriously with the subject, and seeking to get at the essential and abiding truth that underlay and inspired His teaching. We may thus find such a conception of the Kingdom that Jesus preached as shall commend itself to all who believe in a good God, and such as shall vindicate our confidence in Jesus as His Revealer.

But there is another and special reason. Not only are we bound to be loyal to historic fact, however it may seem to us; but I am convinced that by our being so, and adopting Christ's view of the Kingdom in the form in which it is valid for all time (and apart from the external expectations which some have cherished of its coming), nothing will be lost but much gained even for the advancement of the reign of God or "the Kingdom of Christ" in this world. This I have endeavoured to show somewhat fully. Of late there has been a danger of Christianity becoming secularised, and its aim confined to this world, primarily at least, instead of being directed to men as created for sonship to God, and for a higher and more enduring life than that in these bodies of flesh and blood; temporal good thus taking the place of "the things unseen and eternal." But a secularised Christianity, however good from an earthly point of view its aims may be, is not the Christianity of Christ, and can never really do God's deepest and most needed work in the world—can never really meet the world's deep necessity. As Dean Inge has said, "a secularised Christianity is a savourless Christianity."

Something is certainly greatly needed to impart more power to that which, however rich in promise, seems to fail to win an adequate response in the world. We speak of Christ as "the Redeemer of men," and of the world as "a redeemed world"; but, is the Redemption very manifest, or the world anything like a redeemed world? Are men and women living and acting as if they were the sons and daughters of God with an eternal destiny before them? Is not much of our life lived (as Dr. Cairns said recently) as if it did not matter whether there is a God or not, and, I may add, as if there were no Judgement to face—no Hereafter?

The marvel indeed is that, if Christianity be of God, and if man has been created *for* God, the Gospel has not met with a wider response, and that, even where it has been received, it has not, after all these centuries, exerted a more salutary influence on the world than that which it has undoubtedly exerted. But by departing from Christ's conception of the Kingdom and Fatherhood of God, His Gospel became greatly changed, in ways which need not be here detailed, but into some forms of statement in the past which the majority of Christians are now agreed in repudiating; forms which altered essentially the representation of God to men which Jesus made; forms which tended to repel men *from* God rather than attract them to Him. Other evils followed which we need not dwell on, for they are known as evils to all who are acquainted with the history of Christianity in the world. The Christianity of Christ has not had

a fair chance to do its work in the world. The influences that Jesus brought to bear on men for their attainment of their destiny as sons of God have been largely lost, and in some cases perverted, and salvation has been too widely construed in a way quite different from His. But surely, if Jesus is our Lord and Supreme Teacher, it is to Him we ought to look for our Gospel.

It is an *evangelical* Christianity alone that can save the world, because it is through such a Gospel that God in His forgiving and saving love can find entrance into human hearts in which He can dwell and through which He can act. But the older forms of evangelical Christianity, although still effective with some, make little or no impression on the many, save in special times of religious revival and emotional excitement, which are therefore sought to be created. But, surely, *the Gospel of God* ought to be independent of these. Emotional Christianity is apt to be evanescent Christianity. Evangelism has unfortunately become identified with certain forms of doctrine ; but it is by no means confined to these. Just because it is so essential, it needs to be delivered from its bonds and given the nobler sense and wider scope that it had with Christ. Surely Jesus Himself was the first and greatest Evangelist or Gospel-Preacher—by word and deed and self-sacrificing death. If we would do God's work in the world most effectually we must recognise *Christ* as our Master and Leader, and take from Him our Gospel as He preached it and died to make it effectual. In some quarters, " back to Christ "

is unpopular at present. The word is rather "up to Christ and onward with Him." Surely. But how we are to get up to the real Christ so as to go onward with Him, unless we go back to the actual Christ of history, is a mystery. Is not what we need to-day to let Christ bring us back to *God*? I have therefore gone on to show the basis of Christ's preaching and life and work in His sense of *the Fatherhood of God*, and some of the grounds of our confidence in that great fact to-day, to show the reality of the presence of God in Jesus—the real incarnation of God in Him in a modern light, free from the difficulties which not a few feel in regard to its acceptance as commonly stated—at the same time seeking to give a right view of the Person of Christ in its relation to God and His Mission and to ourselves, and of His Cross as He accepted it, especially in its bearing on the practical Christian principle of *Mutual Service*, which I have endeavoured briefly to state Greatly daring, perhaps presumptuous, but really with much fear and trembling, and not with a theological but a practical interest, I have sought to follow out Dr. Denney's suggestion of so stating the truth concerning Christ as to obviate objections, so also as to be in greater harmony with His own sayings and life, and free from the difficulties which the Creeds create in many minds, so that they are excluded, or forced to exclude themselves from the fellowship of the Churches, and in some cases from the Kingdom itself. *This is something that needs to be done.* We say that Christianity is meant for *all mankind*, and that we are labouring for the establish-

ment of God's Kingdom in the whole world, yet at the same time we have surrounded the great Christian truths with conceptions which, not only many thinking men in "Christian lands" cannot honestly profess to believe, but which millions of God's children in other lands can never, humanly speaking, accept. What a contradiction we have here, however sincere the belief and however good the intention. Surely, if the Gospel of God is for *all*; if God be the universal Father (and if He is not, what does our own hope rest on?); if Jesus is "the Lord of all"; if God "will have all men to be saved and come to the Knowledge of the truth," the saving truth cannot have been meant to present such difficulties to any. It is this consideration (along with a personal experience) that has emboldened me after much thought and prayer—not theological interest, nor love of controversy, which I sincerely detest—to take up the subject. It has lain on my mind as a heavy burden for years. What I have sought to do is in the interest of the work of God in Christ in this world of men conceived as His sons, eagerly sought by Him as such, as the very purpose of the creation indeed, and in the interests of that Christian Unity which is being increasingly felt to be so important, but which we are so strongly tempted to confine to those who can accept our own particular views and modes of statement, thereby (may I be forgiven for saying it) sadly departing from our Lord and Master, and hindering the accomplishment of that for which He lived and died.

I have throughout sought to show how the accept-

ance of Christ's conception of the Kingdom, far from lowering our interest in this present world, deepens it, but frees us from its domination and brings more effectually the presence and power of God into it for its uplifting and salvation.

Feeling the need of worthier ideas of our Heavenly Father, "Whose thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways," but high as heaven above them, and of a greater Optimism in our Religion, such as the teachings of Christ and the Divine manifestation in Him suggest, I have maintained the ultimate fulfilment of the purpose of God in His creation, in spite of all that may seem against it, for *all* His children. And, since the Kingdom as preached by Jesus can only find its fulfilment in a Life beyond the present, I have stated in the light of present-day Science some of the reasons for belief in a Future life for all.

I do not expect that all I have said will be at once accepted, but it is all the result of long and earnest thought. If it does any good at all, to God alone will it be due, and to Him be the glory, through Jesus Christ, now and for ever. Amen.

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I

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AS PREACHED BY CHRIST: AN ETERNAL KINGDOM

CHAPTER I

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AS PREACHED BY CHRIST: AN ETERNAL KINGDOM

WHAT we as Christians have primarily to do with is "the Message of the Master" as it comes from His life and teaching and Cross. This we are supposed to credit and receive so as to find in it the inspiration of our lives, and, in turn, our message to the world for its uplifting and salvation. *What was that Message?*

The Gospels show us clearly that it was originally the "glad tidings" preached, first of all, to His own people: "The Kingdom of God is at hand." They show us that this was His message throughout His life, to which was attached all His appeals, counsels, exhortations, and promises, and that the coming of this Kingdom was His Hope in death. The Gospels show us also that this message was founded in the belief in the Fatherhood of God, who was then drawing nigh to men in forgiving love, in "the year of the Divine acceptance": therefore the announcement, "The time is fulfilled, the Kingdom of God is at hand"; and the call, "Turn to God and believe the glad tidings."

What He meant by "the Kingdom" has been the subject of many discussions. This chapter is not meant to add another to their number. Its purpose is chiefly to draw attention to a feature of our Lord's preaching of the Kingdom too much overlooked

in the current acceptation of the nature of the Kingdom.

Two leading and, at first sight, opposing views have been adopted: (1) The purely spiritual and progressive idea of the Kingdom as the Reign of God in the hearts of men, the gradual extension of His Sovereignty, till the goal is reached on this earth in world-wide conversion to His will for men, and all relationships brought into harmony therewith—"the establishment of the Kingdom of God on the earth." This Kingdom is also extended into the eternal world and said to find its complete consummation therein; but the emphasis is placed on the realisation of the Kingdom in this world. This is the most commonly adopted view, independently of those who see in the teaching of Christ something "purely religio-ethical and humanitarian." It has furnished a grand Ideal and high inspiration for Christian life and endeavour. Yet it has sometimes merged the spiritual in the merely social and political and ecclesiastical, and it seems to lack sufficient motive power to win the world for God. Viewing the world as a whole to-day as it actually is, notwithstanding all that has been accomplished, the Ideal seems very far off, and so slow in its realisation that many have ceased to believe in it, and have taken the matter into their own hands. The question is raised, whether we have really fully entered into the "Mind of Christ." Again, can there possibly be an actual Kingdom of God realised on this earth, one that would embrace all the dead as well as those living at the time?

The Kingdom that Jesus preached as His Gospel is also frequently identified with that which we speak of as "the Kingdom of Christ," the extension of which in the world is rightly regarded as the aim of the

Church. But this Kingdom of Christ is *preparatory* for the Kingdom of God as preached by Jesus. It is the gathering in and fitting of men for membership in the eternal Kingdom, and the extension of its principles to every sphere of human life. This Kingdom, Paul said, should be at " the End " delivered up to the Father.

(2) The Apocalyptic or Eschatological view (which may be held in various forms besides those represented by Schweitzer in his *Quëst of the Historical Christ*, and others). This maintains that Jesus adopted not merely the forms of speech of His time, but certain of the current expectations derived from the prophetic and apocalyptic writings of His people, and announced the near approach of an actual Kingdom or Realm to be established by God for His children. The Kingdom of God would thus mean, not merely " the extension of the Divine Sovereignty " (which, however, it would embrace), but the setting up by God of a definite, objective Kingdom as the sphere of new and eternal life. It is possible, I think, that these two views can be reconciled. Each contains elements that cannot be omitted in any true conception of the teaching of Christ, and perhaps it is the failure to give the truth underlying this last-mentioned conception the place it had with Jesus (and with the early Christians), apart from the *forms* in which it was conceived, that accounts to some extent for the tardy and imperfect advance of the spiritual Kingdom. The commonly accepted meaning in Aramaic of the phrase " the Kingdom of God " as denoting " the Sovereignty or Rule of God," is consistent with either view. As Dr. Deissmann remarks (although it is the coming of the Kingdom as spiritual he has in view), " Jesus certainly believed that God already ruled the world as King, but He

expected a quite special act of God by which the definite Kingdom of God would be set up in the world" (*The Religion of Jesus and the Faith of Paul*, p. 116).

I

Although much of our Lord's language concerning "the Kingdom" cannot be taken literally, and much in the Gospels may be due to those who edited them as we possess them, the Kingdom which He proclaimed as "at hand," or "come nigh," although present in certain respects, was certainly *a Kingdom in the future*, one about to come from God to the earth—a kingdom that the "God of heaven should set up." It was a transcendental Kingdom, above and beyond the present order, after, indeed, the then existing age or era had been ended—at "the consummation of the age" then running. It was the "new age," "the World to come," the eternal order, to which the temporal was meant to minister, and in which the real issues of the present life should be found. The pious dead should be raised (from the unseen world) to share in its blessedness, in, it is implied, spiritual bodies; such earthly functions as marriage should cease; the inheritors of the Kingdom should be, in their transfigured bodies, "as the angels (in heaven)"—on, apparently, a transfigured earth. Sin, sorrow, and death should be ended, recompense received for all done and suffered, justice realised at last, the meek should enter on their inheritance, the pure in heart should see God. It was the realm of the Eternal Life. There the life laid down in the service of God should be found again in higher form and enjoyed for ever.

Taking the records as we have them, and allowing

for figurative and dubious elements, as well as for the influence of " the Church," we cannot doubt that the Message of Christ—His Gospel or good news—to His people to whom He was " sent " was that " the time was fulfilled," and the long-promised, eagerly looked for Kingdom which their prophets had affirmed God would set up, in which, as many at least conceived it, they should find salvation from all the evils they endured and perpetual enjoyment of all good, was just at hand ; let them therefore turn in their hearts to the God who was thus drawing nigh to them in His forgiving love—in this " the acceptable year of the Lord "—believe the glad tidings, welcome the Kingdom with joy, be prepared to enter it, be found " the sons of the Kingdom," and not amongst those who should be unfit to enter it when it came. This conception of an actual, objective Kingdom of God colours the whole of His teaching, and there is nothing not in harmony with it. As Professor Burkitt remarks : " Everything else was inference and deduction from this fundamental idea," and again : " To those who have learned to see the vital principle of the Christian movement in this expectation of the supernatural Kingdom of God, sentence after sentence of the Gospels, saying after saying, parable after parable falls into its place " (*The Earliest Sources for the Life of Jesus*, pp. 58, 66). It is only in this light, indeed, that His immediate teaching can be understood, or would have meaning for those whom He addressed.

Take, for example, the teaching in " The Sermon on the Mount "—which is generally regarded as the Manifesto of the Kingdom. Only in such a Kingdom of the Future, not in one to be established on the present earth, after a long lapse of time, could the promises contained in the Beatitudes find fulfilment.

These were pronounced on those then living, who were present and heard them pronounced, and were meant to be comforted and encouraged by them. This comes out most forcibly in the form in which they are given by Luke (vi. 6–26) with the corresponding " woes "—which record some regard as the most authentic; but it is also plain as we have them in Matthew's Gospel (v. 1–8). Clearly, they were impossible of fulfilment to those who heard them in any sphere save a transcendental one. The humble, the mourning, the meek, those hungering and thirsting after righteousness (probably justice), the pure in heart, the merciful, the persecuted for righteousness sake—those immediately addressed, or living at any particular time in the world's history, should have passed away long before the arrival *on this earth* of any such Kingdom of God as many believe Jesus meant by the coming Kingdom. Of course, a " resurrection " was implied in Christ's view.

Throughout this collection of sayings the Kingdom is distinctly an actual realm in the Future, into which some can enter and others cannot: " Except your righteousness exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of heaven " (v. 20). The *Life* of the Kingdom is contrasted with the *Death* of Gehenna (29, 30); that men may " enter into life " they must sacrifice whatever would hinder them (29, 30); His disciples are to pray, " Father—Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as in heaven " (not in Luke); the coming Kingdom should be Heaven on earth—something that should come from God, which He should establish after evil had been judged and cleared away; it was on a new or transfigured earth that God's will should be done as it is by the angels in Heaven (" they should be as the

angels").[1] His followers were not to be over-anxious about the needs of the bodily and perishing life, but to "seek first (or supremely) the Kingdom of God"—the Kingdom of the higher and imperishable life—"and His righteousness" (vi. 33)—the righteousness that would make them members thereof—having, as He said at another time, "their names written in heaven" (Luke x. 20), where "the reward of the faithful" was "great." To "seek first the Kingdom of God" did not mean to set their hearts on the extension of the Kingdom on earth, but on the Eternal provision God had made for His children. Let them trust their Heavenly Father to give them all that is necessary for the present life, if only they lived the true life for which they were created, naturally, as the children of God, as the lilies of the field and the birds of the air lived their lives and found themselves clothed and fed by God: "Are ye not much better than they?" (Matt. vi. 25–34). Theirs was that higher life of righteousness and love which transcends that of the creatures and makes men truly "sons of God," with the life of His love living in them, loving, not merely family and friends, but all men, even their

[1] Dr. T. Walker remarks: "In every instance in the Synoptics where the idea of the Father is intimately associated with the idea of the Kingdom, it is this perfected Kingdom in the Hereafter where His Will is fully done that is in view—'Let Thy Kingdom come,' looked forward to this consummation beyond the Judgement" (*Jesus and Jewish Teaching*, p. 105). Of the Lord's Prayer it is said in the *Century Bible* (St. Matthew, edited by Dr. Box): "It is important to recognise that the Prayer is essentially eschatological in character, like the Jewish *Kaddish* with which it has many affinities." On "as in heaven so on earth," it is noted that, "It was a fundamental idea of Jewish Apocalyptic that the peace and harmony which reflect the Divine Will and prevail in heaven should in the blessed time when the Kingdom was realised descend to earth." Some regard Matt. vi. 10 as a Christian expansion of the last clause of Luke xi. 2.

enemies, with that goodwill that God manifests towards all men in Nature, even the evil and unthankful; they were to be "complete" in their love even as their Father is complete in *His* love (v. 44–48). They were "to do to others as they would have others do to them." Truly this was a "strait gate" to set before men, and a "narrow way" to ask them to tread, but they led to the life of the Kingdom in contrast with the wide gate and broad way that led to "destruction," or ruin (vii. 12–14).

The door of the Kingdom should be shut to all save those who "did the will" of the Heavenly Father. A great Day was coming which would determine who should enter the Kingdom and who should be excluded. Many who had expected to enter should find themselves shut out as those whom its Lord had "never known" (21–23); whereas, He said again (Matt. viii. 11), many would be admitted who would have been excluded by men; only such as not only heard His sayings but *did* them were founding their hopes on the enduring rock; others were building on shifting sand a structure which in the testing Day would fall, and "great would be the fall of it" (24–27). And "those sayings of mine" were simply those enjoining practical righteousness and love.

We do not really need to go beyond "the Sermon on the Mount" to be convinced that what Jesus announced was a Kingdom of God in the Future, in which redemption should come to His people, in which the issues of life should be found, in view of which, and in preparation for which, men should live, if they would live truly and wisely. The Kingdom, He said at first, was *near*, but it might be delayed; later, He taught that it *would* be delayed, and sought to prepare His disciples for this.

Some of the passages quoted from "the Sermon on the Mount" and their equivalents are found also in St. Luke's Gospel, in which the coming of the Kingdom as "the reign of God" is prominent, thus representing the early Source of the Gospels known as Q, from which we have also, among others, that very explicit saying in Luke xiii. 28 (also, with some variations, in Matt. viii. 11, 12): "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the Kingdom of God and you yourselves thrust out"; verse 29, "And they shall come from the east, and the west, and from the north and the south, *and shall sit down in the Kingdom of God.*" From the same Source we have in Luke xvii. 20, 21, a saying which has often been quoted in support of the purely spiritual idea of the Kingdom: "The Kingdom of God is within you." So it certainly is, but it is at the same time a Kingdom of the Future (see vers. 22–24 and cf. xxi. 31).

Although it is not necessary, it may be well to show briefly how the Kingdom appears in *Mark*, the other early source.

The original announcement is not that the Kingdom had come, but that it was "at hand" or "nigh" (i. 14).

In chapter iv. 26–29 the Kingdom is compared to seed cast into the ground, springing up, growing and ripening; then the harvest. This, like the Parable of the Sower, represents the gradual progress of the preaching of the Kingdom till the Kingdom itself appears. The same is the significance of the parables of the mustard seed and of the leaven in the first and third Gospels, although they may also have an individual application. As Bousset remarks: "A mustard seed in the east may spring up in a single night."

In chapter ix. 1 it is said that some standing there

should not taste of death till they had seen "the Kingdom of God come with power." But before it could come, He had said (chap. viii. 31), "the Son of Man must suffer many things, be rejected and killed, and after three days rise again," and this is repeated in chapter ix. 12.

In chapter ix. 43–48 we have "entering into life," or "into the Kingdom of God" (ver. 47), contrasted with being "cast into Gehenna."

In chapter x. 15 it is said, "Whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child *shall not enter therein*," which clearly indicates a Kingdom in the Future, but a present possible reception of it.

The question, "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" (x. 17) looks distinctly to the Future—when the new age should open, and identifies the Kingdom with "Eternal Life"; so also when it is said, "How hardly shall they that have riches *enter* into the Kingdom of God" (23–27); also the idea of having "treasure in heaven" (ver. 21) to be received when the Kingdom comes, and that of being "saved" (ver. 26)—in the great day of Judgement—the original idea of "Salvation."

In chapter xii. 25 it is "when they shall rise from the dead" that the life of the Kingdom shall be entered upon.

When the Scribe is told that he is "not far from the Kingdom of God," it is in spirit and fitness for it (xii. 34).

The whole teaching of the "Short Apocalypse" (chap. xiii.) has reference to events in the Future; only at "the coming of the Son of Man" should the Judgement associated with the setting up of the Kingdom take place, and, "of that day and hour knoweth no man" (vers. 26–32 f.). The same futurity of the

Kingdom is implied in all that follows concerning "the coming of the Son of man."

At the Last Supper He assured His disciples that the day was coming when He should drink of the fruit of the vine "new in the Kingdom of God" (xiv. 25) —which was for Him always something to come in the Future, and it was in that Future that He solemnly assured the High Priest that he should "see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven" (xiv. 62). Such sayings as have been quoted can only be interpreted as having reference to a future Kingdom which should be a possible inheritance for those who heard Him. To "seek first the Kingdom of God" can only mean to seek supremely to have a part therein.

Whether the Kingdom should come sooner or later, His whole aim was to prepare men for entrance into it and for living its life in the world here and now. In any case, the teaching that He gave as regards spirit and conduct contained principles of universal application and of permanent value. "The Kingdom" could not be separated from its ethical requirements. His instructions and exhortations were meant to show the kind of life that belonged to the Kingdom and that fitted men for entrance into it when it came— that Kingdom which God "had prepared for His children from the foundation of the world" (Matt. xxv. 34). The reality of the Kingdom, the blessedness of the prospect, and the need of acquiring fitness for it ran throughout or underlay all the teaching of Christ. It was indeed, as we have seen, His GOSPEL. "Fear not, little flock," He said, "it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom" (Luke xii. 32).[1]

[1] "Like His own people, Jesus expected the Kingdom as a reward for the righteous. In particular, He expected with the coming of

The certainty of a *Divine Judgement*, which would determine destiny, in the first instance at least, was emphasised by Jesus. The Day was coming when all things should be made manifest, when every thing should be revealed, when even " for every idle word that men should speak they should give account." Those who were ashamed of Him and of His words, of them should He be ashamed when He came in His Father's Kingdom. It would be very hard, He said, for some to enter the Kingdom. " Agonise " was His counsel to one who asked Him if there were few who should be saved, " Agonise to enter the strait gate, for many will seek to enter in and shall not be able." " When once the Master of the house has shut to the door " it will be vain to seek an entrance. Some should be " saved," but others would be " lost "—not because of any fiat of God but because, clinging to self, they had failed to take the way of life. A man might gain all the world, and *yet lose himself*. The self-indulgent rich man was pictured as suffering anguish in Hades, while the poor, enduring Lazarus was carried by the angels to " Abraham's Bosom." His disciples should be judged and dealt with, each " according to his deeds." A special doom should fall on the cities which rejected Him, above all on Jerusalem, the national centre ; " the nations " (the Gentiles) should also be judged—not merely as nations but the individuals composing them—according to the spirit

the Kingdom the great compensation, which brings to the poor, the oppressed, the persecuted, and the humble, all which till that time had been withheld from them ; but the popular, legal idea of reward is in His mind deepened into the glorious conception of a gift of grace. The Kingdom is reward, but it is not to be gained by merit. The message of the Kingdom is comfort, but it is also earnest warning (Deissmann, *The Religion of Jesus and the Faith of Paul*, p. 117).

they had manifested and the things they had done, or had left undone.[1]

The judgements in Mark xiii. and parallels denote the doom that should fall on Jerusalem. All three Evangelists make Him solemnly affirm that they should be fulfilled before the generation then living should pass away. A wider (Gentile) world should then be still existing; "the times of the Gentiles" had to be "fulfilled" before the Kingdom could come (according to the later teaching as given in these Gospels). This is, of course, so far, that Eschatalogical view of the Kingdom which closer study of the Gospels is leading many to adopt as that actually preached by Christ.[2]

[1] It should be noted, however, that all these representations of Judgement, with "reward and punishment" and "the Kingdom" itself, are in the terms of the current popular beliefs. While the *facts* of Judgement and of different issues to life must stand, the *forms* in which they are pictured are only those of the time, mostly Apocalyptic; they are not matters of revelation, or of permanent value. There was also an after-tendency to enlarge the eschatological, as may be seen, *e.g.* from Mark ix. 43 f. The picture of the Judgement of the nations (the Gentiles, the "heathen") in Matt. xxv. 31–46, seems to be drawn largely from Apocalyptic material, and although doubtless based on sayings of Jesus, it bears the marks of a later time. By some it is regarded as a sample of one aspect of early Christian preaching. (See *International Commentary*, on Matthew, by Dr. W. C. Allen.) Dr. Burkitt says it "loses half its meaning if the corresponding scene in Enoch 62, where 'the Son of man' is shown 'sitting on the throne of his glory,' be not pre-supposed" (*op. cit.* p. 68; see also his *Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, pp. 24, 25).

[2] "That Jesus fell in with these Apocalyptic views of the time is now conceded by most modern scholars" (Prof. E. F. Scott, *The New Testament To-day*, p. 59). "The historical method insists upon the Apocalyptic hope in the mind of Jesus, but not upon it as the full clue to His mind" (Dr. Moffatt, *The Approach to the New Testament*, p. 213). "It appears to me historically quite certain that Jesus shared in the powerful, popular expectation of the Kingdom. But certainly He ennobled all that was sensuous in the expectation" (Dr. Deissmann, *op. cit.* p. 114). As Harnack

But this by no means affiliates His teaching with that of the Apocalyptists, varied, diverse, and fanciful as that was, nor warrants the statements that have sometimes been made concerning it. His teaching concerning God and man, His essentially spiritual conception of the Kingdom, His deep sympathy with outcasts and sinners, His sense of His Mission as being "to seek and to save that which was lost," the spirit He breathed, the utter absence of vindictiveness, the love He manifested, the inwardness of the righteousness He called men to, infinitely transcended all that we have in the Apocalyptists (with the exception of a few passages here and there, particularly in *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*). Especially is His thought of God far removed from that of the Book of Enoch, with which His teaching has sometimes been associated;[1] we have none of the vagaries, with the fanciful and occasionally fearful representations and speculations to be found in some of these writings. We have, instead, the words of sanity and soberness; we hear one speak—out of a deep sense of communion

said long ago: "The gospel entered the world as an Apocalyptic, Eschatological message, not only in its form, but in its contents; although there was more in the Mind of Christ in Apocalypse of the Father and in His work as Saviour" ("History of Dogma," *E.T.*, vol. i. p. 58). Many other citations might be made, but to refer only further to a quite recent publication: Piepenbring, who deals critically with Loisy, in his *The Historical Jesus*, follows him in his idea of the Kingdom. "In Jesus' eyes the Kingdom of God would be a new era, an entirely fresh and glorious life, even a new and perfect world, brought about by God to replace the existing one. Consequently nothing is more erroneous than the widespread idea that men could or should help to establish or advance the Kingdom of God" (p. 45).

[1] Some believe that Jesus was familiar with *Enoch*. He *may* have known it. There are, certainly, reflections of it and actual quotations from it in the later chapters of the Gospels; but these may be due to "the Church" by which the Book was regarded as inspired (see Jude 14).

with God, and hence with an accent of authority, "as never man spake," so that "all who heard Him marvelled at the wisdom He manifested." Above all, the *spirit* that animated Him was very different from the pessimistic, narrow, and vengeful spirit of many of the Apocalyptists. In His teaching He went far beyond even the most hopeful of them in relation both to the character and the scope of the Kingdom. In short, there can be no real comparison between them. It was only in the general outline and the leading conception of an actual Kingdom of the Future that He can be associated with them. And this was, of course, His religious inheritance. It was "the Scriptures" He based Himself on, not the Apocalyptists.

At the same time, however, it ought to be said that the Apocalyptists were not all the hopeless Pessimists they have often been represented to have been. As Dr. Thomas Walker points out in his careful study of the teaching of Jesus in relation to Jewish beliefs (p. 85 f.), there was an Optimist section as well as a Pessimist one, and Jesus, he holds, identified Himself with the Optimists. They did not all look for nothing but the destruction of the World of sinners. There were some who expected a Messianic Kingdom of Righteousness before the Judgement and the setting up of the Kingdom in eternal form. Others hoped for no spiritual improvement before the Judgement, and the establishment of an Eternal Kingdom for the Righteous.

The eternal Kingdom was sometimes conceived as having its seat on a renovated earth, but sometimes also as belonging to a transcendent and spiritual sphere. Amongst the various forms, however, in which the Kingdom was represented, we do not find one at all identical with that of Jesus, who combined

the idea of a spiritual Kingdom, and community, with that of an Eternal Kingdom to come, along with, or after, the Judgement, apparently to be set up on a renewed earth after the resurrection of the righteous dead—which, however, did not mean a bodily rising from their graves but out of Hades. Sometimes, as in the parables of the Tares and the Net, the Kingdom, or the Community representing it, is regarded as existing in the world before the final Crisis, when all evil-workers and unfit occupants should be weeded out. But by some scholars this last is regarded, most probably rightly, as a later addition. He dealt with the whole subject independently, and must not be taken in the letter merely, but in the spirit. There is, at the same time, a necessary literalism if the original saying is to have its meaning, and a false spiritualisation that ignores that meaning.

All the Apocalyptic writers maintained in one form or other the reality of Judgement and the ultimate establishment of an Eternal Kingdom into which the righteous alone could enter. It was gradually perceived, however, to quote Dr. Charles, "that the earth, however purged and purified, is no fitting scene for an eternal Kingdom. If the Messianic Kingdom is to be of eternal duration and God is to be present with men, then His habitation and that of the blessed must be built, not of things earthly and corruptible, but of things heavenly and incorruptible"; and Dr. Charles points out that, "in the literature of the first century B.C. the hope of an *eternal* Kingdom *on the present earth*, which had been taught by the Old Testament Prophets, and the Apocalyptic literature of the past, is now, except in one work—(the Parables of Enoch (?))—absolutely abandoned for ever" (*Between the Old and the New Testaments*, pp. 57, 71).

Jesus, as we have seen, was at one in this respect with the later Apocalyptic view. But He left behind Him all that, not only in any of the Apocalyptists, or in the Rabbinic teaching of His time, but also in the Prophets of the Old Testament, made the Kingdom centre in Israel or be of the nature of a political or earthly Kingdom in any sense of the words, while He was at one with the Universalism of the later Prophets and of certain Apocalyptists.

From the Gospels it would appear that many of the people of His day looked for the coming of an earthly (political) Kingdom, as we can see from the opening chapters of St. Luke's Gospel, and the question represented as being put to Jesus by the disciples after His resurrection: "Wilt thou at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?" On the part of those Apocalyptists also who upheld the idea of a Messianic Kingdom, it was one centred in Israel. Because Jesus did not countenance this earthly ideal He was rejected and crucified. Although in fulfilment of the prophets and of His own mission He offered the Kingdom first to Israel, to Him the Kingdom of God was something far wider and greater than could be confined to one nation.

II

At the same time there was involved in Christ's preaching of the coming Kingdom that which made it *present* in its essence as spiritual, and present in its powers in Himself, present also in its beginnings and possibility of membership for all, and as in some measure represented in the Community He was forming around Him. It is important to note the formation of this Community although it is not to be identified with the Kingdom. It is not necessary to give detailed

proof of this aspect of the Kingdom since it has been already implied and is accepted by Christians in general. Many books have been written in support of the view. But, if we are to seek only the truth, and to do justice to the Gospel records, we are bound to believe that an actual *realm of God in the Future*, which some could enter while others were excluded, and to seek to secure an entrance into which ought to be men's first concern, was the form in which Jesus proclaimed His Gospel of the Kingdom of God, that this was the outcome of His unique faith in God the Heavenly Father, the primary aspect in which He presented it, the background of all His teaching, and the inspiration of His whole life and of His voluntary death also. He held His confidence in its reality to the very last. He accepted His Cross in the assurance that it would in some way serve the coming of the Kingdom. At the Last Supper with His disciples He said, according to St. Luke's Gospel (xxii. 18) that He should not again " drink of the fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God shall come " ; (Matt. xxvi. 29 has " till I drink it new with you in My Father's Kingdom ") ; and that He should not again eat the Passover with them " until it be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God " (Luke xxii. 16). According to all the Gospels He solemnly assured the High Priest that He would come again in the power of the Kingdom (Matt. xxvi. 64 ; Mark. xiv. 62 ; Luke xxii. 69). Luke tells us that on the Cross He accepted the appeal of the dying robber to remember him " *when He came in His Kingdom*," telling him that that very day he should be with Him in Paradise (Luke xxiii. 43), which, however, was not that Kingdom in the power and glory of which He was to come. He was confident that, although it was His Father's Will that He should die, He should come

again as the Lord of the Kingdom of God—at once to Judgement and Salvation. "Henceforth He should be seated at the right hand of Power and coming in the clouds of Heaven"—the symbol of power just and invincible, as was manifested in the doom that fell on Jerusalem.

III

The good news of the coming Kingdom, including the readiness of God to forgive and accept those who came to Him—for whom indeed The Father was *seeking* in Christ—was not only the gospel that Jesus preached, and the faith in which He lived and died, it was also the faith that was held by the disciples He left behind Him, and of those who were led to believe in Him as the Son of God—the faith that upheld them in the face of all discouragements and under all their sufferings. After His bodily presence was removed they believed that He should only be absent for a time; He should come again to set up the Kingdom. This faith was held by all the first Christians. Paul preached everywhere the Kingdom of God (Acts xiv. 22, xviii. 4–20, 25; Rom. xiv. 17; 1 Cor. iv. 20; Col. i. 13, iv. 11; 1 Thess. ii. 12; 2 Thess. i. 3), not only as a present Kingdom in the heart, but one that should come to earth; a Kingdom for which he urged men to prepare; a Kingdom into which "the unrighteous should not enter" (1 Cor. vi. 9; Eph. v. 5); a Kingdom in which they should find their full "salvation" (Rom. xiii. 11), in which the sons of God should be manifested, and "the Creation itself be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 18 f.) (a saying which we have not yet fully fathomed); a Kingdom in which "God should be

all in all," for which the present spiritual reign of Christ in their hearts (the Kingdom of Christ) was only preparatory; a Kingdom which "flesh and blood cannot inherit" (1 Cor. xv. 28, 50). And although he came to believe that before it arrived he should pass from earth and go to be with the waiting Christ (2 Cor. v. 6–10; Phil. i. 23), yet his confidence in the coming of that Kingdom, of which he and his fellow-Christians were already citizens, finds expression in one of his latest writings—the Epistle to the Philippians, chapter iii. 20, 21—where he says exultingly, "Our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ."

Nor does the Eschatological view entirely disappear in St. John's Gospel. In chapter iii. 3, where it is said, "Except a man be born again (or anew, or from above) he cannot see the Kingdom of God," to "see" does not mean to understand its nature but to experience its life, as verse 5 makes plain where we read, "*shall not enter* the Kingdom of God." In verse 15 to "have eternal life" is placed in contrast with "perishing"; it is the life of the Kingdom; on unbelievers the "wrath of God" (in the inevitable judgement) abides (ver. 36). Jesus says it is of "heavenly things," as contrasted with "earthly things" He is speaking. See also v. 25, 29, the rising of all to life or judgement; vi. 68, "the words of eternal life." In chapter xiv. He assures His disciples of a place prepared for them in His Father's House of many resting places. In chapter xvii. "eternal life is the great gift to be conferred on those who receive Him; they shall be with Him where He is to behold His glory and to be glorified with Him. The beloved disciple may have to "tarry till He comes" (21, 23). In the first Epistle we have "the promise of eternal

life" (ii. 25), verse 28 "not be ashamed before Him at His coming"; "when He shall be manifested" (iii. 2, v. 13), "that ye have eternal life."

As regards the *post-apostolic period*, I quote here the words of the late Professor J. S. Candlish: "In post-apostolic times the idea of the Kingdom of God continues to find a prominent place in the thoughts of Christians; and, as already in the Apostolic Epistles, it is chiefly viewed as a thing of the future (*The Kingdom of God*, p. 40).

The Future Kingdom was thus not only a primary element in the Gospel and teaching of Jesus, but in the Gospel that was preached in His name. The place that it held in the hearts of His followers cannot be explained by inherited Apocalyptic conceptions merely: it must have had a strong foundation in the teaching of Jesus Himself. How are we to interpret this coming Kingdom, and what place ought it to hold in the permanent Gospel? We are not able to-day to hold a belief in the coming Kingdom in the form in which it was pictured by Christ and held by the early Christians; but we cannot rule it out and yet be true to the teaching of Christ. To make it primary is certainly also different from the generally accepted view of the Kingdom of God as a purely spiritual Kingdom to be gradually extended in the world, having for its goal the establishment of the universal reign of God on this earth or in this present world. Yet a constantly extending spiritual Kingdom is included in it. The Kingdom, in the form in which Jesus believed in it, and preached it as having come nigh to men, never came in any outward manner, and although some Christians still hold to the expectation of an outward Coming, it cannot be seriously looked for in that form. There have been times when it was confidently expected; but these

hopes have always been disappointed, and their constant failure has done not a little to divert serious thought from the subject.

None the less we are compelled to accept His representation of a *Future Kingdom* as that which the Gospels give us as the preaching of Christ, and as His very *Gospel*. We have seen that it is essentially a spiritual Kingdom, having its seat in the heart, and that it implies a constantly extending reign of God in this world. But there was something *more* which has been greatly overlooked, while quite in harmony with the idea of a present spiritual Kingdom. By leaving this out we have failed to give full expression to the Gospel of Jesus, and this world has come to overshadow the world to come in the hearts and lives of men. I trust that we shall see that by its acceptance, and by giving it the same place as it held with Christ —not in the *form* in which it was presented—one natural and fitting for those to whom the Gospel was first preached, and for Jesus Himself as the inheritor of the beliefs of His people, and one long maintained by the early believers—but as representing *a great Divine Reality*, we shall lose nothing, and be more loyal to the Christ of the Gospels, but may gain much even for the progress of the spiritual Kingdom, or the Reign of God in this present world. We may, perhaps, find in it that which is needed to make the preaching of the Kingdom of Christ more effective than it is. But the main thing is to be *true to Christ*.

IV

How then are we to regard it? If this was the Gospel that Jesus preached, but which in the form in which He preached it did not find fulfilment, what are we

to say? Was Jesus mistaken? Were His promises to these poor people baseless? Did they point to no Reality? Was the Hope that upheld Him in death and inspired His disciples after His departure a visionary one?

It has been said that "it was fortunate that the forms offered to Jesus were the loose imaginative ones of Jewish Apocalyptic, and not the philosophical categories adopted later. His language, although much of it has lost its literal import, has the advantage which the language of symbol always has over that of abstract thought. The definitions of the creeds have grown out of date, along with the philosophies which produced them, but each new age has been able to attach its own meaning to the Kingdom of God" (*The New Testament To-day*, p. 60).

That may be true, but does it do justice to Christ? If He was what Christianity believes Him to have been, may not *His* meaning of the Kingdom (apart from forms of the imagination) be truer and better than those that each age has formed for itself? Some of these were certainly very far away from Christ. If we are to see in Jesus the Revealer of the mind of God concerning His human children; if He was really, in things essential, inspired by God; if we can place our confidence in His teaching beyond what heart and conscience can directly attest; if we can derive from Him any knowledge of God's purpose for His children beyond this life, must there not have been some great *reality* underlying the representation He made of that Kingdom which He said God had prepared for His children, the coming of which He preached as His Gospel, fitness for entrance to which He urged men to make their first concern? Instead of leaving it aside and passing on to something that

we can approve, ought we not rather to endeavour to find the underlying reality, and give it the place in our preaching of the Gospel which it had with Him, in such forms as will appeal to the men of to-day? Perhaps there was a deep meaning in it which we have not grasped, for the want of which, in the place which Jesus gave to it, our Gospel is poorer and less effective than it might be, especially since that general outlook and expectation of the coming of such a Kingdom that existed on the part of many to whom Jesus preached does not exist in the world to-day.

Bousset in his little Book (*multum in parvo*) entitled *Jesus*, after remarking that "History, the irrevocable march of events, have proved that the expectation of an immediate and mighty transformation was mistaken," goes on to say: "Nevertheless even here it will be advisable not to throw away hastily and rashly things of permanent value and importance in the preaching of Jesus. The form of His preaching of the Kingdom was transitory, and the husk has already shed itself. But within the form there lies an eternal content—and all that appears to us strange, fantastic, and childish in Jesus' preaching of the Kingdom we must regard as the necessary body without which the spirit hidden in it would not come to life—as the transient and glittering raiment cast over eternal ideas" (pp. 96, 97).

What then was that underlying Reality? It was the conviction in the heart of Jesus—must we not say, the revelation to Him in the region of the spirit?—that God had provided for His children something far transcending their experience here; that there was a Realm of Eternal Life for which all that is temporal is only preparatory, that as man was created in view of this destiny, his true life could only be found by

making this eternal life his primary concern, not the life of the perishing world. This did not imply that eternal life was something to be gained in the future merely. Jesus ever sought to quicken men into that life here and now. But the sphere of its manifestation and full enjoyment was in a transcendental Realm. There was an eternal Kingdom or Realm of God yet to be revealed, to fit themselves for which should be their chief concern, and the life of that Kingdom was nigh to all who would seek it and begin to live, not for self or the world, but as God's children in the world.

In thus translating our Lord's representation of the Kingdom of God in the Apocalyptic forms familiar to Himself and His people into more permanent terms, we are only doing what had been done with Apocalyptic long before. For, as Dr. Charles reminds us, it is not to the prophets but to the Apocalyptists that the idea of a future life of blessedness for God's children is due : " The belief in a blessed future life springs not from prophecy but from Apocalyptic " (*op. cit.* p. 18).

The very term a " Kingdom of God " was derived from the Apocalypse of Daniel (which had much influence on popular expectations and is quoted by Jesus), where in chapter ii. 44 it is said, " in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed," and in chapter vii. " dominion and glory and a kingdom "—a universal and everlasting kingdom—is given by " the Ancient of Days " to one like unto a son of man—a man—representing " the people of the Most High " : " his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him " (vii. 13, 14, 27). Here also we have mention of names " written in the book " (xii. 1)—Jesus spoke of the members of the Kingdom

of God as those who had their "names written in heaven" (Luke x. 20; the idea of a "Book of Life" is of frequent occurrence in the Old and New Testaments). We have also, in chapter xii. 2, the first occurrence of the phrase "Eternal Life" (A.V. and R.V. "everlasting"), which became almost, if not wholly, equivalent to "the Kingdom": "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to eternal life and some to shame and eternal contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament (Jesus, 'then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father,' Matt. xiii. 43), and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Dan. xii. 3).

This was more than the earthly Kingdom of the prophets; although still centring in Israel as "the people of the Most High." But in all cases "the Kingdom of God" really meant *the ultimate triumph of their God and His people* over all that was opposed to them, whether the scene of the Kingdom was laid on the earth or beyond it. We have a similar conception of the triumph of the good God and his people in the religion of Zoroaster (see chapter v.).

The point is that the root idea of "the Kingdom of God" and its meaning as it was preached by Jesus was that of *the ultimate triumph of God and of His people with Him.* With Jesus, it meant the ultimate fulfilment of the Father's good purpose for His children. Its reality is thus a conviction which any one believing in the supremacy of the True and the Good, in the reality of a just and good Creator must entertain.

II

THE INFLUENCE OF THE FUTURE ON THE PRESENT: "THE POWERS OF THE WORLD TO COME"

CHAPTER II

THE INFLUENCE OF THE FUTURE ON THE PRESENT: THE POWERS OF THE WORLD TO COME"

THE preaching by Jesus of a Kingdom of God in the Future contains elements that have been too greatly ignored in modern conceptions of the Kingdom. Hence the Kingdom has sometimes been identified with "the Church" and sometimes with Social reform and a new Social State, and in general it is supposed to be realised when a perfect condition of human life on *this* earth has been reached—a Kingdom of God in this world. As already said, the Eternal Kingdom has very commonly been confounded with the preparatory "Kingdom of Christ," which He is to deliver up to "the Father" before or at "the end" and the establishment of that Eternal Kingdom in which "God shall be all in all." Its essential character as a Kingdom of the Future, its relation to the Unseen and Eternal, to an order above and beyond the present, from whence it derives its power to influence men, its relation to Judgement and destiny, have been in recent times far too faintly realised. As a consequence, notwithstanding earnest preaching of the Kingdom, and devotion to its realisation in the world, the Kingdom preached has seemed unreal, and, apart from what missionary effort has wrought in heathen lands, the world as a whole has been very little moved in its actual life. The reason is because the

appeal of Christ, as repeated by us, has lost to a great degree its force as "a world-renouncing and world-renewing power." Yet the operation of such a power is essential if the world is to be saved. What the world needs is salvation from itself. And such salvation can only come through the impact of a higher life upon it; it is not of man but of God.

This mistaken idea of the Kingdom implies, indeed, a misconception of the immediate and direct aim of Christ. He did not set before Himself as His Mission the promotion of human progress in this world, but the deliverance of men from the power of the world over them and their finding their true life and destiny as the sons and heirs of God. At the same time, this lifting of men above the world was the means whereby the highest good could come to the world in every aspect of its life, and the only means by which it can be saved.

Christ's idea of the Kingdom was so different from the Jewish conception of the gradual extension of God's "Sovereignty" or rule in the world (with a prominent place for Israel therein) that He was rejected and crucified by the then representatives of Judaism. To them it was too spiritual and other-worldly, related primarily, not to expectations in this world but in that unseen and Eternal sphere (only faintly believed in), for life in which man was created, which should endure when all belonging to this world had passed away. We have been following too exclusively the Jewish conception, with, of course, Christian elements brought in. Jesus sought to lift men above the world, while not neglecting it. It was by the Kingdom getting into individual hearts that the world could be uplifted. We need to return to Christ.

(1) As long as men's chief interests are centred on *this* world, and as long as the coming of the Kingdom of God (where it is regarded at all) is made, practically, the same thing as social, national, and international improvement, and the elevation and progress of man's earthly life in morals, and even in religion—truly Christian and imperative as these aims are—the *saving value* of Christ's Ideal of the Kingdom of God is largely lost. The things of this world come to take the place of God's purpose for man as His son and heir. It is held, indeed, that the fruition and the fulness of the life of the Kingdom are only to be found in the eternal, but this looks too much like something tacked on to the idea of a Kingdom to be established on the earth, and is very seldom dwelt on: whereas the relation of the Kingdom to the Future was essential and in the foreground with Christ. In it alone could human life find its real and permanent Good, that which God intended for men as His children and in their creation, that which brought hope and courage to men in this present world as well as inspiration to rise above it, that, indeed, which gives ultimate meaning to life.

Is it not undue clinging to this present world, as if it were all, and to its things as the chief good, that is one of the most potent forces of misdirected life, of ambitions, and selfish grasping at outward good and pleasure, of wars and oppressions, of many, or even most, of "man's inhumanities to man" that have cursed and still curse the earth? Are not these the things men need to be saved from? We speak about *sin* in a way that is little heeded. But what is the real root of sin in men? Is it not departure in their hearts from God and His ideal of man, the pursuit of the things of the world, and the gratification of the

lower self, the love of the creature rather than that of the Creator. What revolting crimes men and women will commit for the sake of money; to what depths of degradation they will sink to gratify the flesh; what regardlessness of others the pursuit of riches and of pleasure engenders. By shortening our ideal aims and appeals to this present world and its interests we miss the very powers that would uplift the world, and not only bring it nearer what God means it to be, but that which would ensure the temporal good we seek to see realised? And is it not for the want of that *decisive* world-renunciation which Jesus called for that our Christian life is so poor and our works so ineffective? There are many sincere Christians in the world, but if their life were deeper and more decisively for God, would the world be what it is to-day? It would not.

(2) Is it not because the message and Call of Christ and His Gospel of the Kingdom of God are regarded as having reference to this world chiefly, and as finding their fulfilment therein while yet such long delayed and imperfect fulfilment, that so many are indifferent to them? Is it not largely because of this that our Gospel seems to have lost its power to *move* men in general? *It misses something deeply seated in man,* who is not a child of earth only but also a child of God, with a destiny beyond this earthly life, determined by his life here: he must be appealed to as such.

It is not a re-awakening of fear or desire for a merely selfish salvation from future suffering or loss, or for "a happy life in Heaven," that is needed, although in Christ's teaching the reality of suffering and loss for those who failed to seek fitness for the Eternal Kingdom is prominent, whatever may be thought of the forms of statement, or of *ultimate* destiny. But

as long as men fail to realise—what faintly makes itself felt in all—that there is something real and decisive beyond this life, a judgement for all—not necessarily deferred to the Future, although it may only then be realised—in which character and conduct in their relation to a higher order than that of this world are the determining factors, as well as a great Hope for all who suffer here, they will not be, on the whole, greatly moved. Not till men come to see that the present world is, as Jesus in many forms of speech taught, the sphere of a probation, or of an education and an opportunity to rise to a higher and better life in a spiritual and eternal world, in which the issues of the present life will be found, can the present world be lifted above itself, as it must be lifted if it is ever to be saved. We have been preaching too long an eviscerated and one-sided Gospel; we must return to the entire message of Christ.

(3) Apart from the Kingdom of the Future, as representing God's provision for His human children, we cannot find *a real and adequate gospel for suffering and dying men and women*, a rational meaning in this life with its varied experiences, always ending in death; or a satisfying theodicy or justification of the ways of God—something in keeping with what we *say* is the character of God. Life in this present world is for many very unsatisfactory, unfair, even cruel and tragical, quite impossible *in itself* to be reconciled with the idea of the all-wise, all-just, all-good God and Father we ask men to believe in. Subconsciously at least, they feel this, and therefore do not respond to our appeals. While, at the same time, the rationality dominant in the creation is everywhere manifest, suggesting a rational meaning in life and a rational consummation. Individual life in the case of millions

would appear to be something begun, but impossible of completion. The Creator would be like the man in the parable who began to build, but was not able to finish ; His work would seem to have met with an obstacle in Death which it could not surmount. Yet death is necessary for the extension of Life. Apart from a Future Kingdom of God this present life would have no ultimate meaning, and our creation no final object.

Some who refuse or hesitate to believe in a future life for the individual speak of " the conservation of values," as if that were sufficient to justify creation and human experience. But what are those abstract values ? Is not *a worthy personality* that which has the highest value ? Is not " an honest man the noblest work of God " ? Is not man created to be a son and heir of God ? The ploughman poet shows a deeper insight and a finer feeling when he says in his " Man was made to Mourn " :

> " Yet, let not this too much, my son,
> Disturb thy youthful breast ;
> This partial view of human kind
> Is surely not the last !
> The poor, oppresséd, honest man,
> Had never, sure, been born,
> Had there not been some recompense
> To comfort those that mourn ! "

It is all very good for such as are well and well-off in this world to say we need nothing more than this present life. Of such Jesus said, " they *have* their reward." But what of the many steeped in poverty, immersed in suffering, with no hope before them but death ; of the millions tortured and swept away in wars at the hands of their fellow-men who share the same fate ; of the many oppressed, unjustly, some-

times cruelly treated, by those who have the power in this world with no redress—life ruined; of the dwellers in the slums who scarcely ever see the Sun the Heavenly Father made to shine on all His children, who have no foothold on the Earth He made for man to dwell on, and hardly a chance of a decent and moral life, or the possibility of rising to anything higher; left to herd together in misery and degradation? Is it not arrant selfishness to be content with the present world because *we* are well-placed in it, because, refusing to look higher, *we* get what pleases us or because *we* have been "saved" or uplifted? Where is our humanity? Let us think of others as well as of ourselves! Apart from what *others*, many of them unknown to us, have done for us in toil and suffering, and what countless others are doing for us every day, this life that we count so good could not be ours. Have we no consideration for *them*? "Let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus"—who, from the highest height man could stand on, stooped to the lowest depth that He might uplift others. Why *He* and not *you*?

While Optimism (of a poor kind) might well be cherished by the fortunate and successful in this life, who see and wish for nothing higher than the present, Pessimism would be the legitimate conclusion from a wide view of human experience. The Gospel of Jesus was specially one for "*the poor*," the suffering, the oppressed, craving for something better than this life had given them. He assured them that God had provided something far better yet to come, that, high above all that is of man, there is *a Kingdom of God* to be revealed, in which all wrongs shall be righted, justice done to all, all true hearts satisfied, their deepest feelings met, and God's good purpose for His

children fulfilled. He urged all to become the members of that Kingdom of the Future, assuring them of God's ready forgiveness and acceptance, if they would only come to Him, however unworthy they might be. Nay, it was, He said, *because* God was drawing nigh to them in His forgiving love that He had been *sent* to proclaim the nearness of that Kingdom to the men of His day. Lift up your hearts, said Jesus, leap for joy, the Kingdom of God is at hand.

This was the Gospel of Jesus, a very real gospel it was to the people of His day—and this is the evangelical and saving word for the world of the present, the Gospel that will bring men really to believe in God. We may not preach it in the same forms, but there is no substitute for it; something is left out that the human heart craves for, and without which it cannot be satisfied.

(4) Again, it is sometimes said that the Righteousness Jesus called men to is *an end in itself*; it does not look for rewards, and does not have anything to do with compensations or redress, or with the future at all. "Duty is *here* for us whether there is a future or not." Quite true; but if righteousness be an end in itself it belongs to the Eternal. Nothing that is temporal merely can be an end in itself. And what is "righteousness" apart from *the righteous person*, or the person that can be made righteous? Is not *this* the very highest kind of creation, the most glorious for God? There is *value* in each soul which He does not wish to lose although the human eye sees it not. It was not merely for *time* that Jesus called men to righteousness, it was in order that those responding to His call might have *the purpose of God in their creation* fulfilled in their experience, might become the sons of God, partake in His nature, do His works

in the world and inherit the Kingdom God had prepared for them. It is not merely for our satisfaction, but for the honour and glory of our Creator that we must believe in a Future Kingdom, and live for it.

(5) Because the Kingdom did not come to earth in the form in which Jesus proclaimed it and His followers expected it, we have ceased to have any really effective belief in it ; we no longer give it the place He gave it, we no more look for it—except, indeed, a few of us who expect its coming in a way that has always met with disappointment and that *seems*, at least, impossible. These expectations, often confidently asserted, have, as already said, tended much to draw attention away from the Reality. And where men have professed to be living with a view to a heavenly future without manifesting that *life* of the Kingdom which is inseparable from it, this has done much to discredit it. With us, in general, however, the Future Kingdom has the last, instead of the first place, where it has any place at all, and is more than a mere conventional belief kept up as a kind of relief from the darkness of death. Certainly, we do not preach it as the *gospel* of Christ. This is why Death is so dark even to Christian people in spite of all that we *say* we believe, instead of being the gate that opens into a higher life. We meet the loss of friends and read the daily obituaries with a kind of dull submission like that of the animals, and, although we try to forget it, this earth seems at times a very dark place. If we really believed the Gospel of Jesus, witnessed to in His own life and death and rising again, the darkness would be dispelled and Hope would banish despair.

It should be manifest that only a Realm of Life beyond, such as Jesus proclaimed, can give ultimate meaning to the present life, or secure the conservation

of what is of real value in this world. For it is not only the Christian Apostle who says " the world passes away and the desire thereof," but our modern Science also gives reasons for believing that the time will come —however far off it may be—when this world shall be unfit for human life, when the sun himself shall grow cold and the last man shall die, to be succeeded by another temporal world. What, then, of all that has been evolved in the life of *this* world, save that which has belonged to a higher and eternal world? A person whose cultivated land drops back into the primal wilderness gets nothing finally out of it but his character. Is not Christ's Gospel of the Future thus the real Gospel for men? And surely that which is the only enduring world and the things thereof, ought to have the *first* place with us all, not as withdrawing our interest from life in this world, but as giving to life its real significance, as raising us above the dominance of things that perish, and as bringing the principles and powers of the higher world to bear on the present. If Christ's view of God's thought of man is true, this world can only have a preparatory and subordinate place. There is a higher world that claims us, in relation to which alone our true life can be found, and, as we succeed in finding our true life here, this present world will inevitably be benefited.

Nothing is more likely to give the present world its true place in men's minds than to see that the Kingdom which Jesus preached is a Kingdom of the Future, the principles of which should rule in the hearts of men, making them *true men here* and fitting them for membership in an eternal world. Nothing will do so much towards making the present world right. At the same time we must refrain from attempts at mental construction of the Future, from affirmations concerning

it which have no real warrant in our Lord's Teaching, given wholly, as that was, in the forms of His time—not matters of revelation—and from expectations of the coming of the Kingdom in the manner in which it was pictured.

(6) *It is strangely forgotten that there can be no complete or permanent Kingdom of God on this earth.*

A kingdom on this earth merely, after myriads of its inhabitants have passed away, and itself bound some time to come to an end with the end of the world, would be no worthy goal for an infinite Creator and Father of men. Let us picture ever so perfect a kingdom here on earth, it could only be inherited by the merest fraction of humanity—those living at the time—and would be bound to disappear. None of those to whom Jesus gave the promise of the Kingdom, none of those immediate disciples for whom He died in order that they might rise to spiritual and eternal life, would be there; none of the many who had been His faithful followers in preceding centuries, who had suffered and died for the Kingdom's sake, would be in it. For a real Kingdom *of God*, in which His good purpose for His children is fulfilled, we must look beyond this present life; it can only be found (as the later Apocalyptists saw) in the realm of the unseen and Eternal. Jesus in His whole teaching sought to lead men to live in the temporal in the light of the Eternal, to keep ever before them the reality of a Judgement that should determine their destiny according to character and deeds, to live ever in view of a world to come, above and beyond the seen and temporal, where justice is done to all, deliverance from every kind of evil found, and the high creative purpose of God fulfilled.

Moreover, as Professor W. M'Dougall points out, in

another connection even if we had at any given time the whole inhabitants of the earth moralised with even Christian ethics of human equality, in another generation there would be a return to barbarism and chaos (*Ethics and Some Modern World-Problems*, p. 88, etc.).

(7) The *forms* in which Christ pictured that Future Kingdom were those familiar to His time and people, and His expectation of its speedy appearing in these forms was not realised—" God having provided some better thing for us." It was the only way in which He could represent to them an Eternal spiritual Kingdom, the only way, perhaps, in which He pictured it to Himself. But the idea of a Future Kingdom of God represents *a great Reality* which we, in our praiseworthy devotion to the establishment of a Kingdom of God in this present world, are in danger of overlooking, yet, without belief in which, the coming of a spiritual Kingdom in this world cannot be realised as it might be. It represents a reality beyond this fleeting and troubled life—a reality which alone gives meaning and value to this life. Deeper than the forms in which it was announced, there was a great and abiding truth possessing the Mind of Christ—one which had in some form possessed prophetic souls before He came—which He felt Himself sent of God to proclaim—a truth so overmastering and so important that He died to convince men of it and make it effectual in their experience. *What Jesus felt so sure of* as to be ready to die for it was, that the then existing order of things did not represent God's ultimate purpose in His Creation, that man had a loftier ideal than was being realised by most men, that he was created to be a son and heir of God, that this was true for the humblest, poorest, even the most despised and the worst. He

was sure that the Heavenly Father had something far better in His heart for His children than the often darkened experience they were passing through here, that this experience had a Divinely-intended good issue, that their yearning for deliverance was legitimate and natural and would assuredly be answered—speedily, He believed. It was this promised, longed-for Kingdom of the Future that He proclaimed had drawn nigh to men in the Fatherly and forgiving love of God.

The reality of this Kingdom, in whatever form it may be regarded (and although we may be wholly unable to picture it to ourselves), and the truth of man's nature and destiny as a son and heir of God, need to be re-affirmed and re-emphasised to-day. To say that its realisation is impossible is to deny the infinite power and love of God, the Creator of millions of worlds, varied in character, and all founded in what is spiritual ; it is to assume a knowledge which no finite being, however deep his researches, is entitled to profess ; it is to judge of possibilities much as the ants, so clever within their limitations, might judge of things human in their little world ; rather let us rise to the Faith of Jesus, and so regain some measure of His power.

(8) Jesus preached this Kingdom *as a Gospel* to men. Time was, after the Spirit that animated the early Christians had been largely lost, when the sayings of Christ about the Future (and probably some that were only attributed to Him) were taken literally, and such interpretations given them that the Future was made to overshadow the present in a most unwholesome manner, and men in Christ's name traded on the fears of their fellows. Individual Salvation came to be thought of as deliverance from the terrors of future punishment of sins. Heaven became a place that could be won in various ways, one that could be entered

by favour or by payment; real spirituality was sunk in physical fears on the one hand and desire for sensuous enjoyment on the other. But it was never a mere happy future Jesus offered men; the Kingdom was inseparable from its ethical character. Still, it was *as a Gospel* that Jesus preached the coming Kingdom—good news, glad tidings; it was only by their refusing to embrace it and live the life of the Kingdom that any should suffer loss—in the words of an apostle, they "judged themselves unworthy of Eternal life."

It was not as something to be feared that Jesus preached the coming Kingdom. John the Baptist, following the darker Apocalyptists, had so preached it; his cry was "Flee from the wrath to come"; but with Jesus the coming of the Kingdom was the drawing nigh of the Father in forgiving love, something to be supremely welcomed by all who valued the life God had given them, who longed for deliverance from the evils that oppressed them and for greater freedom and fulness of life. Jesus preached the Kingdom as the realm in which alone life could find fulfilment. Associated with this preaching were those assurances of the forgiving love of God and openness of the Kingdom to all who would come to God, which *we* have come to think of as "the gospel" distinctively. We retain this gospel of Divine Forgiveness (although often, "in the wisdom of man," hedged round with devices nowhere to be found in Jesus), so beautifully pictured in the parables and declared in the self-sacrifice of the Cross; but with Jesus this belonged immediately to the Gospel of the coming Kingdom. Membership therein was what forgiveness opened to all. It was from the Kingdom that sin and self, or opposition to God, excluded men. But God was not

only ready to forgive all who came to Him, but longing for them, and had sent Jesus to save them. This was a gospel that should brighten the present world to many, raise them above its power, make them, as multitudes of His followers found under the worst that man could suffer, " more than conquerors."

Another, not only unchristian, but inhuman and wicked misuse of the Gospel of the Future Kingdom was to point men, suffering from injustice here, to it for redress, while present conditions were left unchanged. Such evil possibilities lurk in the human heart fixed on this world's goods, that that which was meant to raise men above themselves was perverted to sink them lower. This has done more to discredit the gospel of the Future than anything else. But of late, belief in any future that can really influence the present has almost disappeared. From one extreme we have gone to another. Men and nations are living and acting as if there were no Future to reckon with and no Power higher than man and the battalions he can muster. In this way men are losing the best in life for themselves and for the world at large, just as the Jewish nation, by rejecting Christ's message of the Kingdom, took the course that brought such ruin upon them as made Jesus weep when He foresaw its certain coming: " When He beheld the city He wept over it." Perhaps He weeps over the world to-day.

Is not Christ's Gospel of the Future the Gospel for the world now and always? Do we not need to return in earnest to His preaching of the Eternal Kingdom, to rise to share in His confidence that man is the child of eternity, that the Heavenly Father has provided something infinitely better for His human children than the present experience of many who

shall never live to see the "social betterment" and the "perfected Humanity" we tell them is coming (which, indeed, the majority have ceased to believe in), something, too, for those who have passed away without finding anything like what life promised them, even though they followed the true and the right, or, perhaps, *because* they followed it, who all their lifetime were passing through experiences which could only be justified as being endured with a view to an outcome beyond this earthly life? *Jesus promised all who were willing to receive it a true fulfilment of their life.* Their trying experiences here were not in vain. These were not ends in themselves, but pointed forward to ultimate gain by the enduring personality. This was the Gospel of Christ—Why not preach it more earnestly to the men of to-day? Could there be any better news brought to men? "Whatever your experience here may be, whatever your outlook on this earthly life, it is open to you to find life in its Eternal fulness as meant by God for you. You are created to be a son of God and an heir of Eternity." "Man may kill the body," said Jesus, "but he cannot *kill* the soul." If we do believe in it and preach it, we may not only find in it a *motive* that will make our Christian preaching of the Kingdom more effective than it is proving itself to be, but shall so raise men above the perishing world as to tend to make a spiritual and real Reign of God a fact in this present world, as far as it can ever be such in an imperfect and transitory sphere. By interpreting Jesus as we have done in the past, we have got too greatly away from His Gospel of the Kingdom, consummated, as that gospel was, by His Cross.[1]

[1] Schweitzer, in his well-known book, *The Quest of the Historical Christ*, rightly pointed out how we have made Jesus express *our*

(9) What is so greatly needed is *a motive* that will induce men to rise to seek the life of the Kingdom. While men were regarded by Jesus as created to be sons and heirs of God—as they must be regarded to-day—His appeal was (so far at least) directed to that *natural self-regard* which in the case of the vast majority of human beings can never be eliminated, and is the primary and most potent motive with them. It is in the instinct or impulse of *self-preservation* that the origin of religion itself is to be found.[1]

The world-negating principle of Jesus can only be accepted by men in general under the influence of

ideas rather than His own. In his recent Selly Oak Lectures (on *Christianity and the Religions of the World*, which I have gladly read since the foregoing was written) he said, "We modern men are inclined to interpret the thoughts of Jesus in a modern way. We are familiar with the idea that by the active ethical conduct of individuals the Kingdom of God may be realised on earth. Finding that Jesus speaks of ethical activity and also of the Kingdom of God, we think that He, too, connected the two in the way that seems so natural to us. In reality, however, Jesus does not speak of the Kingdom of God as of something that comes into existence in this world and through a development of human society, but as of something which is brought about by God when He transforms this imperfect world into a perfect one. In the thought of Jesus . . . we are to be ethical, not in the expectation of thereby fulfilling some purpose but from inward necessity, so as to be children of God's Spirit and in this world already to enter into His will. Jesus does not build up His ethic with a view to solving the problem of how to organise a perfectly ethical society, but He preaches the ethic of men who together strive to attain to a perfect yielding of themselves to the will of God" (pp. 28, 30).

[1] "The origin of religion, inaccessible to historical investigation, is therefore to be approached by a psychological inquiry. Our question is, How did men ever come to create religion at all, and why has it persisted in ever-changing forms through all the stages of civilisation? If we seek a motive, universal, supreme, perpetual, it will be found in the impulse to self-preservation. Spinoza rightly says that the *conatus sese conservandi* is the mainspring and directing principle of all human action" (Dr. G. F. Moore, *The Birth and Growth of Religion*, pp. 3, 4).

something that appeals to them more strongly than does the world or the nature-self. We must take men as we find them and as they are created human, with their natural and necessary human instincts, desires, etc. It is true that appeal must be made to the highest in men, the noblest, the most heroic, but, as in the great war, these feelings can only be brought into action under the influence of a sufficient *motive* to stir them, and when that motive is removed these higher feelings tend to die out, as we have too good reason to know. Although some may respond to the appeal to the highest in them, as this has been developed, largely under Christian influences, the generality of men and women can only be reached by an appeal to *self as it actually exists in them*; yet it must be such an appeal as, if responded to, *will raise them above self*. We are, all of us, founded in an animal nature, and the deepest principle of the "natural self" is that of *self-preservation*—absolutely necessary for existence in this world. It is this instinct, limited by earth, unregulated by higher influences, that creates ambitions, jealousies, envies, suspicions, selfishness, and leads to oppositions, strifes, wars, and to most forms of the evils from which men and nations suffer. Yet, if man is to be raised to a higher manhood—which is that which Jesus came to effect—this same instinct must be appealed to; it must be *subliminated*, or receive a new orientation. Men must be led to realise that there is a higher order than the natural—a moral and spiritual and Eternal order; that their true and enduring self belongs to that order; that they have been created for a higher life than the earthly, even for real sonship and heirship of God; that their true and enduring life can only be found in a realm above and beyond the seen and temporal; that *this* is their real life, that

which has the greatest value for them, not the greatest *earthly* good, and that of absolute necessity, it will be realised by them just in the measure in which they have yielded themselves to the Spirit of that higher life; that to refuse it is to "*lose the soul.*"

We can never get away from the self-regarding principle in man. Say what we may, it is *this* that determines our acceptance or refusal of the call of Christ. Much of the present-day indifference to religious appeal, and to religion generally, is due to the absence of adequate motives brought to bear on men *as they are.* They have got away from the old ideas of retribution, from all thought of ultimate life-consequences, so that they think there is nothing to dread, or to be seriously concerned about in the future, and nothing to be gained by religion, as gain is reckoned by them. This may seem very humiliating, but it is only too true. To affirm this we do not need to see nothing but selfishness in human nature, or to deny human progress in nearly every aspect of the earthly life; but if we stop short at this, that which Christianity means by salvation is not effected.

In the old days preachers sought to get men to "*feel their need* of salvation," so that it appeared supremely desirable; and, although this may have been described as "an appeal to selfishness" it was found to be that which, more or less, *saved men from self,* although sometimes, owing to its imperfect presentation, it failed so to save them and issued in another form of selfishness. It is not the theologian only who sees it, but others who think, especially such as fearlessly study human nature as it is in general. Otherwise there would be *no need* for Christ's salvation. Professor W. M'Dougall remarks: "It is a nice question: To what extent is the lapse from orthodox observances, so remarkable

and widespread among the more highly civilised peoples at the present time, due to the general softening of religious teaching, to the lapse of the doctrine of divine retribution to a very secondary position, and to the discredit into which the flames of hell have fallen ? " (*Social Psychology*, p. 312). This may be so, while at the same time we recognise that much in the old theology, especially in ideas of Hell and punishment, greatly needed softening and moralising. But, if there be nothing at all put in their stead, the full Christian truth is not there. Neither the hope of heaven nor the fear of hell will in itself make men Christians ; but they are related to facts that cannot be wisely ignored ; they may move men in the right direction—and both were certainly used by Jesus.

It remains true that in the case of most men, although they are potential sons of God, the " natural self " is *all* that is influential in them, and must be *moved* if they are to be won for anything higher. It is not those who have already risen to the higher life we have to win, not " saints " but " sinners," not the spiritual but the unspiritual, and the appeal must be made to that which is most influential in them *as they are.* This is not to lower either man or the gospel ; but it is the normal way in which the gospel, or anything else, can become effectual and men be raised to a life above self and the world—which many of the appeals that are made, and even so-called conversions, seem to fail to effect. No man will seek to make his own a good unless he sees it to be better than that which he cherishes as his good. What is needed is salvation from self, and yet this can only be effected through an appeal to self.

Be it noted that it was actually thus that Jesus appealed to men. He " knew what was in man," and

took human nature as He found it, and as it fundamentally remains. "It *is better* for thee, He said"; "What shall it *profit* a man if he should gain the whole world, and lose *himself*?"; "Thou fool!"; "See that ye build your house on the solid rock and not, like a foolish man, on shifting sand, else great will be the fall of it"; "Seek ye *first* the Kingdom"; "Agonise to enter in at the strait gate, for many will seek to enter in and shall not be able"; "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, but in heaven"; "Make yourselves friends out of the mammon of unrighteousness," etc. It was the thought of the abundance in his father's house, while he perished with hunger, that brought the prodigal home. In the writings of Paul and of John it is salvation from "perishing" that is prominent. There must be a *motive* that will appeal to man as he is, and preachers have sought in various ways to awaken that motive.

While Jesus called for the sacrifice of the lower self, it was in order that a higher, more valuable self, one's true self, might be found. And what signifies all else to a man if he does not find his true self? If Jesus bade men sit loose to this world's good things, and to "things" in general, even those deemed necessary, it was in order that a higher good might be theirs, which would also carry in it the lower; if He asked for self-sacrificing devotion to the Kingdom, He also assured them of the certainty and the greatness of the reward: "He that wills to save his life shall lose it; he that is willing to lose it for My sake shall find it—shall keep it *unto life eternal.*" There should be a rich reward even in this world—that which always comes from finding the truth—"and in the world to come Eternal life." Here, it was like the unexpected finding of treasure hid in a field, or, after long search, coming

upon a priceless pearl. To die to self was not only to *find* one's self ; it was to find *God*, to have God and the Eternal Love that He is living in us. As Meister Eckhardt said, " Jesus did not define the Kingdom, for it really meant *God*," and to find *God*, with all that that implies, is something infinitely beyond all that the acquisitiveness of the natural man which goes so eagerly forth into the world, seeking to find its satisfaction there, can gain. Here is something far richer within his reach. To find God and have the love that God is living in us, instead of self, is not this the life that the world needs to have living in it to-day, the life that alone can save it ?

(10) The New Psychology will help to illustrate our theme. There is much in it still unsettled, and some of its inferences may well be seriously questioned. As represented by some there is in it not a little that repels. But some fundamental principles seem securely based in the nature of man. All are agreed that certain natural instincts, however they may become modified by habit and intelligence or external constraint, are the *prime movers* of human life and action. We may take it as represented by Professor Berguer of Geneva in his interesting Book: *Some Aspects of the Life of Jesus from the Psychological and Psycho-Analytical Point of View*. While not accepting the extreme positions of Freud, which other Psychologists have criticised in various ways, he yet says (and says truly) : " Taking both tendencies into consideration, we may say that at the source of our life there is a formidable instinctive urge, a copious stream of natural instincts and desires that are peculiarly related to the flesh " (p. 20). These must be *sublimated*, that is, raised to a higher level, " so that the purely natural instincts may become, as it were,

supernatural. This sublimation may take place in various ways, gradually or in conversion." Instinct, the *libido* [an ugly word, although it only means, Tansley says, " mere energy flowing along defined channels "], the primitive vital urge, he holds, seems to exist solely to raise man up to the love of his neighbour in the largest and noblest sense, and if this sublimation fails to take place, " disease, neuroses, madness, in a word, perdition, are at the door." He adds : " It is a curious thing that we are led back by the study of psychic analysis to the very terms of which Christianity avails itself in order to express the fundamental opposition in which human life struggles, *salvation* and *perdition* " (pp. 23, 24). This may seem an extreme statement, but it has a solid basis in fact, although the consequences stated are often, in various ways, averted.

While thus illustrating the necessity for individual conversion in some form, gradually or suddenly, Dr. Berguer does not apply the principle to illustrate Christ's preaching of the Kingdom. But it applies here equally. Unless sublimation takes place we have consequences, in the wider field of the world's life, similar to those he speaks of. It is just from the absence of this sublimation that the world has suffered and is still suffering. On any view of the Kingdom, that which Jesus Christ came to do was to raise men into a higher life, to lead to the sublimation of the instincts, desires, and affections, to extricate them from their narrow individual bonds, to give the life-urge direction upward and onward, to raise men out of the mere life of nature to sonship to God—as man was lifted out of mere animality to manhood—to raise men above the present world, toward which they are naturally attracted, to a higher world and a loftier

destiny, thus truly saving them from themselves, and in so far instituting the Reign of God instead of that of man. How could this be more effectually done than by proclaiming the reality and nearness of a supernatural world, a world in which God's will should be wholly done, in relation to which the issues of every man's life should be found, in which world man's whole hope lay. How can the needed sublimation be more effectually brought about to-day? *Man must* rise above himself if he would reach true manhood; he must die, to renounce self as it is in him in such various and changing forms, if he would find a true and abiding self, said Jesus:

> "Unless above himself he can
> Erect himself, how poor a thing is man,"

said the English poet. He must rise above the world, whether as pleasing or opposing him, if the world is not to trample him under her feet, laughing at him, as it were, behind his back. As already said, the world needs to be saved *from itself* to its true self. While at many points man and his world have been raised as time has gone on and elevating influences have been brought to bear on them, yet there is always some point, generally many points, where the lower principle rules, and this may throw the whole into disorder. And the Kingdom, although not "near" as something external, is always near to men, yea, "within them."

(11) Far from lessening men's proper interest in this present world, or their endeavour for the betterment of human life and the establishment of the reign of God on the earth, the seeking first of the unseen and eternal Kingdom is that which will give the greatest incentive thereto. Not as making that the supreme

motive and endeavour of their life, but as the inevitable outcome of their life for God in the world. As Schweitzer remarks, " according to the teaching of Jesus men are to be gripped by God's will of love, and must help to carry out that will in this world, in small things as in great things, in saving as in pardoning. In this imperfect world already to be glad instruments of God's love is the service to which men are called, and it forms a preparatory stage to the bliss that awaits them in the perfected world, the Kingdom of God " (*Christianity and the Religions of the World*, pp. 27, 28)—" His (Christ's) significance for us is that He fights against the spirit of the modern world, forcing it to abandon the low level on which it moves even in its best thoughts, and to rise to the height whence we judge things according to the superior will of God, which is active in us, and think no more in terms of human utilitarianism but solely in terms of having to do God's will—becoming forces of God's ethical personality " (p. 32).

The lower, though necessary, interests of life will take care of themselves, if only we will act rationally—" the world affirms itself automatically "—we cannot act rationally or even live without attending to those interests ; but there is something very much higher that calls us, and we are liberated by Christ to serve it.

The hopeful seeking of the Kingdom must be taken along with the seeking of that " Righteousness " which belongs to it without which none can be a member of it, and it is just such righteousness as Jesus called men to seek and practise that the world needs so greatly in it : only *that* can make it in any measure a Kingdom of God. It was no mere " interims-ethik " that Jesus preached, but principles of abiding

and universal application. It was not other-worldliness He called men to, nor to a spirituality severed or apart from what is rational and moral, as witnessed to by reason and conscience in men. But there was in it a light that should illumine the reason and educate the Conscience. And His moral Ideal was an infinite one, such as should create an ever-ascending morality. Jesus did not despise the truly moral man. For the soil into which to sow " the seed of the Kingdom," He sought " the good and honest heart."

To seek the Kingdom of God, to become a member of it, meant supreme devotion to God and His will for men instead of to the world and its offered good ; it meant the transcendence of the Nature-self in order to make our own the higher God-intended self ; it meant living so as to be the sons of the Heavenly Father, cherishing the love that He manifests in His unfailing and universal working towards all men, even our enemies ; it meant living and acting in the world so as to be the " salt " that preserves it from corruption and seasons it with goodness, and the " light " that " by good deeds " reveals a Higher Power, ever seeking to do good, working through us, manifesting God to men and glorifying Him (Matt. v. 13–16).

The Kingdom, as Jesus preached it in its essentially ethical and spiritual character, cherished in the heart as the supreme aim and hope in life, means a great deal and would carry us far. There was nothing ascetic, unnatural, or narrow in " the Kingdom " as preached by Jesus, any more than there was in the life of Him in whom the Kingdom was present. He mixed freely in a friendly manner with all kinds of men ; He felt a patriot's sorrow over the ruin which He saw His nation drifting into. While there must be absolute self-surrender to God and stern self-repression

and sacrifice in view of all that is evil, there was nothing "puritanical," as we would say, in Christ's view of the Kingdom. With Himself there was no formal Holiness or separateness. He dined with those who asked Him; so free and generous was He in His intercourse that He earned for Himself the designation of "a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." Living above self, or to His true self, He was a Lover of men, the friend of little children, the defender of despised and brow-beaten woman. The Kingdom meant a life of brotherly goodwill and helpfulness; mutual service (as we shall see) was its great practical principle. It meant "following peace with all men as far as in you lieth," sinking the natural feelings so as to maintain it, while yet not denying requisite self-assertion when necessary, as illustrated by Jesus Himself. Like his Lord, the man of the Kingdom will not seek merely to speak always soft things or to please people, but will follow truth and speak it forth; he will stand firm to the right whatever that may cost. At the same time *Love* will ever be made the ruling principle of his life; and this Love, being really God in him, carries in it all good.

The man in whose heart is the Kingdom will take a living interest in all that belongs to God's world and to man as created by God; he will have a new, deeper, and personal interest in all things. Everything in this marvellous world, its wonder and beauty, all that belongs to searching Science and worthy Art, all that uplifts in Music, all that illuminates in literature, all that refreshes and amuses, all that lightens labour and banishes gloomy care, all that makes human relationships what they are meant to be, all that is just and merciful, all that makes for natural and pure enjoyment, all that continues the Divine work of

Reason and Love, all that is just and kind and merciful to all creatures, all the onward movements of men and nations, in short, everything that is true, pure and good, rational and loving, belongs to the life of the Kingdom here, and is preparatory for that which is to come. All is viewed in relation to God and His thought for man ; all is sanctified to Him, not in any forced or formal way, but naturally, spontaneously, joyously. The darkness having been banished from death, the recompense of suffering and the rectification of wrong being assured for all, the world wears a different aspect entirely, the citizen of the Kingdom can rejoice in life as no other man can do, and by his brightness brighten life for others. Having been freed from self, he comes to regard others in a new light altogether. He is at all times anxious to know what he can do for his fellow-creatures, man or beast. He holds in all sincerity Coleridge's maxim :

> " He prayeth best who loveth best
> Both man and bird and beast ;
> He prayeth best who lovest best
> All creatures great and small :
> For the dear God who loveth us,
> He made and loveth all."

Jesus was like that, was He not ?

He whose heart has been captured for the Kingdom feels that he can never do enough for God and his fellow-creatures. Such is the natural result of having " the heart in Heaven " ; for to have it there is to have it with God, and to have God Himself in some real measure in us here. Like the old peasant in *Aunt Janet's Legacy*, he not only carries his treasure in his heart, but his treasure carries him. No one has ever lived so completely above the world as Jesus did, yet no one has made such a salutary impression *on the*

world, or done as much to uplift it. The more truly His life and works are reproduced in us, the more shall we do for the world's salvation. It is the *life* of the Kingdom lived in it by its members that tells.

The world can be saved in no other way than by being raised above itself. It is the *heart*, the central self, that must be reached, and in its outlook and interests sublimated. With Jesus the Kingdom was no mere outward possession. He made it plain that it could never be had as such ; it implied Sonship to God and whole-hearted devotion to His will as the motive of the life. The saying, " Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness " brings us at once up against the essential thing : a decisive moral choice, the making of which is the making of the man, failure to make it his unmaking. External effort may do much for the world, but the radical evil will be left unchanged ; deliverance must come *from within* :

> " The heart's aye the part aye
> That mak's us right or wrang."

To win the heart for God is the object of the preaching of the Kingdom. It is only God Himself who can save His world, and the preaching by Jesus of a holy Kingdom above and beyond this world as His Gospel and the *first* concern of men was the means by which God sought that entrance into human hearts which should issue in both individual and world-salvation, and in this way He seeks it still, or would fain seek it. Above all, it brings us face to face as it were with God as *the Father of us all.*

When we see the Gospel of the Future Kingdom to be the gospel that Jesus preached in forms " understanded of the people," and how it carries in it, and necessarily sends forth, the influences that can make

the reign of God increasingly real in the present world, we can farther see how the two conflicting views of the Kingdom can be harmonised, and how we can accept His Gospel of the Future Kingdom yet lose nothing for the present, but gain much. We can understand also how eager Jesus was to preach it and to send forth others to preach it, to tell men that it had "come nigh" to them—and it is always nigh to us all—to win them for it, to be "fishers of men"; how He was ready to die for the Kingdom's sake. We can see too how "the word of the Kingdom," once received into the heart, was like a seed which should become a great tree, or the leaven that should leaven the whole life. The thought of it lifted men above the passing world with its cares and anxieties, its suffering and sorrows, its oppositions and injustices, its snares and temptations, above themselves, transforming the life of self into a life for others, quickening a universal love, which nothing of earth or time could quench. It brought them to the Father, and made them His devoted sons and true brothers to all men. If our Gospel does not do this, there is something lacking in it.

It was in order that the life of the Kingdom might be preserved, perpetuated, and extended in the world that Jesus instituted what He termed "My Community" or "Church" (Matt. xvi. 16), to take the place of the Church of Israel which had been untrue to its calling. To this end He gathered around Him His disciples and sought to spiritualise and train them for their high function in the world. This gives us the true idea of *the Christian Church.* They were already in spirit members of the Kingdom, although still imperfect in their understanding and held in large measure in earthly bonds; but, until the Kingdom

in its Eternal form came, they were to be *its representatives and agents in the world*, so living and acting " that men seeing their good deeds might glorify their Father who is in Heaven."

That He thought of them as forming a definite community is clear, apart from disputed passages about " the Church." It is clear from what He said of them in contrast to the Kingdoms of this world: " It is not so among you; but whosoever would be great among you shall be your servant, and whosoever shall be first among you shall be servant (bondservant) of all." It appears also from the charges He gave to them, the promises He made, and the warnings He addressed to them in His later parables and discourses. Here also belongs the saying in Matt. vii. 22–23: " Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Thy Name? and by Thy Name cast out demons? and by Thy Name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from Me ye that work iniquity." Such sayings (although some of them may be later) suppose the Kingdom as meant to be, in its essential spiritual character, represented and extended in the world by those who professed to be its members, and as existing in the world for some time before the establishment of the Eternal perfected Kingdom. We are led to think of the delay as Divinely intended, to give opportunity for a larger membership—one that should go on increasing, while the world lasts. Here is the significance and function of " the Kingdom of Christ."

The Community was not by Christ identified with the Kingdom (as it afterwards came to be), but was composed of those who at least professed to share in its life, and looked forward to entering it, when set up in its perfected form, as their dearest hope. They were

meant *by their life and works to represent the Kingdom and to win men for it.*

The Book of Acts shows us this Community as quickened into a life of love and unity by the inspiration of "the Spirit," and formed into a common *Fellowship* in which self was wondrously transcended and all were one in Christ and the Love He manifested: "No one said that aught of the things he possessed were his own; but they had all things common." This was not the Communism of the world-agitators, but a *Christian* Communism inspired by love, purely spontaneous, with nothing compulsory in it, the outcome of that spirit of sonship which is the first essential for a real Communism. Outward circumstances, not any failure of the Spirit, made its spread and continuance impossible. Out of the *Christian fellowship* the organised Church came into being. Paul, who frequently speaks of the "Church," has many references to this *Fellowship*, the spiritual unity realised in which was really the life of the Church as the Body of Christ. In the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* it is represented by the grains of wheat scattered amongst the hills but gathered together so as to constitute one loaf. Into this unity Jews, Greeks, and Barbarians, masters and slaves, men and women, could enter on equal terms on the sole condition of confession of "Jesus as Lord," and be as "one new man" in Christ. The bond of this union was Love. In the Johannine Writings the reality of this brotherhood in Love is emphasised: "He that loves not knows not God, neither he that loves not his brother"; "By this we know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren"; "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples," said Jesus, "if ye have love one to an-

other." How much of this *love* is manifested in "the Church" of to-day? Yet Jesus said it should be the proof that men were His disciples. For this unity in Love Jesus prayed, "that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me." This idea of a community or brotherhood in love was dominant in the early days. As the late Principal Lindsay remarks in his work on the Early Church: "The term 'The Brotherhood' alternates with 'the Ecclesia (or Church)' in early writings." It was this life of Love, not confined within their own circle, but flowing forth to all around them, that so greatly impressed the world and drew many within the fold. Men could say, not only: "See how these Christians love one another," but, "See how they love all men, even their persecutors and enemies, and seek to do good wherever they may." To this spirit that animated them is due their far-reaching principles of the equal relation of all men to God, the equal interest of all in what God has provided for His human children, and the many self-denying, just, and charitable works that make up "the Social results of Early Christianity." [1]

In illustration of the kind of life which the Christian Community or Church lived in the world and of how truly it met the idea of Jesus as representing the life of the Kingdom in this world and made for its extension, some portions of *The Letter to Diognetus*, by an unknown writer, placed by Gwatkin perhaps 130–150 A.D., may be quoted:

"Christians are not distinguished from the rest of mankind, either in locality, or in speech, or in customs.

[1] On the "Fellowship and the Church," see Dr. Anderson Scott's *The Fellowship of the Spirit*. For the "Social Results of Early Christianity," see Schmidt.

For they dwell not somewhere in cities of their own, neither do they use some different language, nor practise an extraordinary kind of life. . . . But while they dwell in cities of Greeks and Barbarians as the lot of each is cast, and follow the native customs in dress and food and other arrangements of life, yet *the constitution of their own citizenship which they set forth is marvellous*, and confessedly contradicts expectancy. They dwell in their own countries, but only as sojourners ; they bear their share in all things as citizens, and they endure all hardships as strangers. Every foreign country is a fatherland to them, and every fatherland is foreign. They have their meals in common, but not their wives. They find themselves in the flesh, yet they live not after the flesh. They obey the established laws, and they surpass the laws in their own lives. They love all men and they are persecuted by all . . . . In a word, what the soul is in a body, this the Christians are in the world. . . . The soul loveth the flesh that hateth it, and the members: so Christians love them that hate them (who should yet come in judgement)."

After saying that this new kind of life they received from God through Christ, the letter concludes with an appeal: " Dost thou not see them thrown to the wild beasts that so they may deny their Lord, and yet not overcome ? Dost thou not see that the more of them are punished, just so many others abound ? These look not like the works of a man, they are the power of God ; they are proofs of His presence." (From Dr. Gwatkin's *Selections from Early Christian Writings*.)

The kind of life described above, natural yet spiritual, recognising earthly citizenship yet belonging

to a higher Fatherland and looking above and beyond the earthly, is, in its essential character, just that which Jesus meant His Community, or Church, to manifest in the world while the Kingdom was delayed.

Any one who reads Church History knows how soon, alas! this Ideal was lost, and whether it has been adequately recovered by the Churches of to-day is a serious question for them. To its absence in the past on the part of the Church as a whole much of what is described as "the failure of Christianity" and "the unattractiveness of the Church" to so many to-day are owing. Without entering into detail, no one can seriously doubt that had Christ's Ideal been preserved and followed out, the history of Christianity in the world would have been very different, and this world saved from much that is deplorable. It would have been much more like one created by God for His children, even if only for a time, than it shows itself to be, and the misunderstandings of Christianity and bitter opposition of many to the Church as its organ could never have arisen. Is not the word to all this word of old: "Examine yourselves, try your own selves whether ye be in the Faith, prove your own selves." For, whatever may be said of doctrines and Churches, it is the *Christ-life*—the life of God—in the soul that alone can save the soul or uplift the world. If the Church were to set itself to represent the life of the Kingdom in the world, what a power for good it would become. (See further, Chapter X.)

Let us ask now: What was the ground of Christ's confidence in the reality of the Kingdom He proclaimed?

III

THE GROUND OF CHRIST'S FAITH IN THE KINGDOM: HIS THOUGHT OF GOD: DIVINE FATHERHOOD.

CHAPTER III

THE GROUND OF CHRIST'S FAITH IN THE KINGDOM: HIS THOUGHT OF GOD: DIVINE FATHERHOOD

AS belonging to the Community of Israel, Jesus inherited the belief in a Kingdom of God yet to be revealed. But the deepest ground of His confidence in the reality of the Future Kingdom was based on His thought of God as *the Father of men* (or, according to two of the Gospels, on His *knowledge of God* as a son). To Him God was not merely the Creator of the world, the Lord of men and the Father of the Nation of Israel, but His relation to all men could only be described by the word " Our Father." This may be anthropomorphic, but if we are to speak of God at all, we can only use human terms, while remembering that He of whom we speak far transcends their human connotations. Men of various races and from very early times have instinctively thought and spoken of God as " Father." For Jesus, God was also " Lord " —" Lord of heaven and earth "—but His emphasis was placed on the Fatherhood; it was as " Father " that Jesus almost exclusively spoke of God.

The God of Jesus was not the stern Jehovah of many portions of the Old Testament, or the great Lawgiver merely. Had He been so, the Ideal of a Kingdom of God would not have been more attractive than " the Sovereignty of God " was to the average Jew. Nor could it have been a World-Ideal, since

Israel was Jehovah's people in an exclusive sense, or, at least, in a supreme sense. Nor could a system of "Laws," however good, have proved self-acting. The promise of "the New Covenant" was, that the time would come when the Law of God would be written on men's hearts, which is equivalent to saying that Law would be changed to Love, or, as Paul put it, that men should be no more servants but sons to God. It was this New Covenant that Jesus said was sealed with His blood. Its establishment implied a new revelation of God and a new stage reached by man.

It was not in Law but in Love that God came to His people in Christ—in Mercy indeed, forgiving the Nation's sins. He is One with whom we are akin—"the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," the God and Father of us all. The very name, *Father*, if we take it in earnest, has in it an attractive power. This was the distinctive teaching of Jesus concerning God, and it gives quite an exceptional complexion to the Kingdom, making it, not a Kingdom merely, but the Kingdom *of our Father*, a family of God and a Brotherhood of men.

That God is our Father, Jesus constantly declared with no reservation, except to make it plain that God was a *Holy* Father, and that men, as *they were*, might not be His *true sons*. But God was truly our *Father*, transcending the best human fatherhood: "If ye who are evil (relatively to God, who alone, Jesus said, is 'good') know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him"; "your Father who is with you in secret"; your Father who clothes the lilies in their glorious robes, provides for the birds of the air, cares even for the

humble sparrow in its fall, " before whom the very hairs of your head are all numbered " ; " your Father and My Father " is the word He is represented as sending through Mary to His disciples. This Father-God is the God of the Kingdom. A Kingdom implies a Community, but this Community, whether on this earth or beyond it, is to be a Divinely constituted *Family*—a Family of God.

It may be suggested that those thus spoken to were already members of the Kingdom and so had become true sons of God. But if God is *the Father*, all men must be His children. They are not all *true* sons indeed, not sons in the higher moral and spiritual sense of likeness to God—the sonship for which they were created, to which Jesus called on men to rise. A good father may have very imperfect and even bad children, but they *are* his children none the less. The prodigal who turned his back on his father's house, wandered so far away, and sank so very low, was still a son. His return was inspired by the thought that he had a father to go to. " How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger. I will arise and go to my father." He found no change there, but was welcomed home as a son : " This my son was dead and he is alive again ; he was lost and is found." And the elder brother, who, in his selfishness and self-righteousness, was quite as far from his father, was also a son : " Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine "—if only he could make it his own.

All were sons, Jesus taught. But all were not *true sons of their Father*. God was the Father of all by their creation (as personal spirits in the image of His own Personality) and in the Ideal of their life and destiny. They were sons ; but God is an ethical

Being, and full sonship to God consists in moral likeness to Him, in the possession of our Father's spirit and character. Their Father, for example, was complete in love for all His children, the love that, operating as law in Nature, ever seeks to do them good, however unworthy and ungrateful men may be, " making His sun to shine and His rain to fall on the evil and the good alike." So, said Jesus : " Be complete in your love as your Father is complete in His love ; let a like benevolence, a like love of *goodwill*, go forth to all men, not only to your friends and them that love you, but to all, even to your enemies, and so *become* the sons of your Father who is in Heaven by being *like* Him, by possessing His inmost nature." God is the all-perfect Father, and Christ's call to men was to be like their Father, above all in the Love that directs and rules our life and carries everything. A family of sons of God in Love was the Divine Ideal, which is, of course, the same thing as the Kingdom or reign of God in men. This, realised in its perfection in the Eternal Kingdom, was the creative Thought and Purpose.

The natural or creational Fatherhood of God became obscured by the legal analogy adopted by St. Paul, of adoption into a family by which he illustrated the new relation to God that had come to the Israelites, who were but servants under law before, but now were " no longer servants but sons." For long it was in many quarters deemed unorthodox, and even dangerous, for Christian teachers to speak of men as sons of God by creation. Even yet some modern scholars do not admit that God was represented by Christ as the Father of men by creation. It is said that it was rather in His Fatherly Providence and care for men that He was their Father, and men only

became sons through trust and obedience. There are no doubt difficulties in the way of the thought of God as the Father of men by Creation ; but the very Gospel, and, indeed, all our highest hopes rest on it. It is true also that it is in connection with God's Providential regard for His children that Jesus most frequently speaks of the Fatherhood of God, and that it is by trust and obedience that men become the true sons of their Father. But, surely, God does not care only for those who come to Him. The entire Gospel is in contradiction of this. And why should He care for men with a love like that manifested in Christ if they were not His children ? It is His Fatherhood that is the basis of His Providential regard. And how can men ever become sons unless there is in their nature that which is akin to God ? which we can only possess as the result of our creation by God—the creative process being also an educational one ? Man, *as man*, possesses a moral and spiritual nature. He is founded in animality, but there is something more in every man—something in virtue of which he seeks God, cannot rest or realise his full manhood till he finds his Father. There is a light not of earth, nor of our own kindling, that shines in all :

> " A spark disturbs our clod,
> Nearer we hold of God,
> Who gives than of His tribes that take, I must believe."

Too often man may turn his back on his Father and on his soul's true home, but there is a homing instinct that seldom if ever dies out ; he can be made to feel his need and to say, " I will arise and go to my Father." But if God were not *first* his Father, how could he go to Him as such, or ever think of Him at all any more than the animals do ? God must be

his Father before he can go to Him in trust and obedience, and it is in virtue of our possession of a spiritual nature that such trust and obedience are possible. Whence has he received that nature but from God in the process of a long-continued creation? And what relation to creation has this God who is Father in virtue of His Providential care only? How can He take account of man or be there at all? But Jesus positively taught that God was man's Creator: "He who made them at the first male and female." He who clothes the lilies in their beauty, who makes His sun to shine on all alike, and who, by the very fact that He does so, calls men to be like Him in character *because* He is their Father.

Again, Jesus was the Son of God in virtue of the nature He possessed, but He was at the same time the Son of man, the revelation not only of God, but also of man as His child. Was it not His aim to lead us all to realise that same sonship to God according to our measure of capacity? Only thus could we be His "brethren"; only thus could He be "the first-born among many brethren." "Inasmuch as *the children* were partakers of flesh and blood, He Himself took part of the same."

One motive for denying the creative Fatherhood of God and the natural sonship of man is no doubt in order to guard against what Dr. Moffatt describes as "the modern sentimental view of the Fatherhood as celestial good nature" (*Theology of the Gospels*, p. 121), which is certainly "wholly inadequate to the teaching of Jesus." But, as Dr. Clarke remarks, "Both the sternness and the compassion of God are parental." "Father-like He recognises the creation as truly His own and rightfully entitled to His care. If God has produced a universe, it is inevitable that He

should save it" (*Outlines of Theology*, pp. 139, 140). There is, however, a real danger of men resting in the thought of a sonship lower than the ethical and ideal, and of thinking of God, not after the highest type of human fatherhood, but as an easy, good-natured Being, before whom good and bad are all the same, and it does not much matter what we are or do. A poor kind of Fatherhood *that*—not Fatherhood at all, certainly not the holy Fatherhood taught by Jesus. Thomas Erskine puts this matter of sonship well when he says: "We are by virtue of God's will and purpose in the relation of children, and are therefore not called to make ourselves children, but in the knowledge of a relationship that already exists to yield ourselves to our Father's instruction that we may become His righteous children. The sonship is not a new relation communicated through faith or any other subjective means, but in itself coeval with man's creation." We may fall far beneath our ideal and refuse God's teaching; but "the belief that we have been created for education affords the only explanation of the endless varieties of human life—the only approach to a solution of the mystery. The principle," he goes on to say, "I regard as the very basis of the Gospel, proclaiming, as it does, God's eternal and unchanging purpose for man, to raise him by education into fellowship with Himself, to make him a partaker in His own righteousness and His own blessedness" (*The Spiritual Order*, pp. 74, 75).[1]

[1] "That all men are sons of God by nature, in the sense that they are the sons of God in their true essential being, that Divine sonship is the birthright of all men is undoubtedly true. It is a truth often neglected by theology, and strongly emphasised by Frederick Robertson and Phillips Brooks [as it had been by Erskine, Maurice, and M'Leod Campbell]. But in their actual "natural" condition the Divine sonship is undeveloped and unrealised, and needs to be

It was by men realising this their relationship to God, and becoming His true children, that they entered the Kingdom as invited by Jesus, and that the Kingdom itself in its present spiritual character *comes*. God Himself was thus living in them in the same manner, though not in the same measure, as He was supremely and uniquely present and living in Jesus the Lord of the Kingdom. It is this that gives us the truest and most attractive conception of the Kingdom of God; whether we think of it as a present Spiritual Ideal or in its Eternal reality; it is not only the Kingdom but the Family of God.

No one has ever given such a high conception of the essential nature and possibilities open to man as Jesus did. Many of the Stoics, such as Epictetus and Seneca, also taught that men were the sons of God. But their idea of sonship lacked the high, even infinite, note of Jesus; their Divine Fatherhood did not possess the evangelical warmth of that declared by Him; they could not make men feel that they spoke for God as He did. Seneca, for all his beautiful teaching, ended in miserable suicide: Jesus went freely to the Cross in ratification of the truth He had proclaimed, and in order to bring men to the realisation of their sonship.

The distinctive thing in Christ's consciousness was His sense of sonship to God; He knew Himself to be God's Son and Representative; but He also knew Himself to be man's son and Representative, therefore He was confident that all men were, ideally at least,

quickened into full reality by the power of Christ" (Dr. Drown, *The Creative Christ*, p. 126, note).

"Man," says Dr. H. R. Mackintosh, in his *Person of Christ*, "is the son of God, even if a lost son; and it is his proper destiny to be partaker of the Divine life" (p. 439). The matter is so important that these quotations may be excused.

sons of God. While the nature-self dominated them, they were but living as children of Nature ; Jesus said they must die to that self that they might realise their true self in God's image and their Divinely intended life and destiny. The first Christians all looked up to God as their Father, and found their brightest hope and deepest joy in the thought. The emancipation from legalism to sonship Paul gloried in as the great Redemption : " Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father ! " It is as that same cry is sent forth from men's hearts that the Kingdom comes in the world in its Divine spiritual power and that men become fitted for the eternal Kingdom and Family of God.

The idea of God as a Father, especially of the nation as His chosen son, belonged to the Jewish religion. He was sometimes addressed as such in prayer : " Doubtless Thou art our Father," cried the prophet ; " Like as a father pities his children, so Jehovah pities them that fear Him," sang the Psalmist.[1] But with Jesus it was not merely those that feared Him the Father pitied and sought to help, but those who feared Him not and who stood in most need of His gracious aid, which He would send them at all cost to Himself.

Jesus so spoke of God as Father—speaking with authority, as He did, and living a life of real sonship—as to make it a new revelation of God and to give a new conception of man as an individual, cared for by God, with the infinite value belonging to him as such,

[1] Dr. Thomas Walker gives a considerable list of passages from Apocalyptical Writings, showing that God was conceived as the Father, not only of Israel and of the righteous people, but also of the individual, and even of all men. At the same time, however, he endorses Professor Toy's remark that it does not seem to have been a favourite conception; the Jewish national conception was strong enough to depress it (*op. cit.* pp. 36 f., 56).

which had, however, to become actual through his realisation individually of his sonship. If, in the old religion, God was thought of as a Father, certainly man, *as man*, was not regarded as *a son*, nor was God known as that loving and seeking Father, yearning over the wandering and lost, making effort, and stopping at no sacrifice to find them, as He was revealed in Christ. This care for the sinful and going after the lost is admitted by liberal Jewish writers to be a new and impressive feature in the conception of God, *e.g.* Mr. Montefiore in various writings.

In the personal life of Jesus we can see how real and influential in His experience was His confidence in the Fatherhood of God. It was the most outstanding feature of His Life, its constant inspiration and guidance, His tower of strength and source of peace. Prayer to His Father on the lonely hillside, in the silent watches of the night, was that which upheld Him under all His temptations, disappointments, and conflicts, and made the way clear before Him in the darkness. His Father's will for Him made all things good; in His agony "Abba, Father!" was His cry, and "Not My will but Thine be done." He accepted His Cross because convinced that it was His Father's way for Him. It was a dark way for flesh and blood, but if it was His Father's way, all would be well. He trusted His Father and made the great venture of Faith and sacrifice of Love. There is nothing more touching than the absolute confidence of Jesus in the perfect goodness of His Father's will for Him under all circumstances, even the most trying and painful. Was Jesus in this beautiful trust mistaken? Was there *no* Heavenly Father moving in Him, guiding and upholding Him? When He cried in the agony of His soul to His Father, was He only speaking into the void?

Was His trust placed in something unreal, something that had existence for Him only because of His own sense of need—a projection from His own consciousness, as some would say? If so, what a miserably deceived creature is man, even in his highest and holiest manhood! Where is there anything *Real*, trustworthy, or of abiding *value* for him to be found in the whole Universe? Nowhere! But, fortunately for human life and sanity, the sequel proved the validity of His confidence.

What we have in Christ is not merely teaching concerning God, but *revelation* of the Father. In Him we "see the Father." We witness a truly human person possessed by a Higher than Himself, towards whom He stands in the relation of Sonship, so entirely loving and obedient to the higher will that it is His "meat and drink" to do it, even though such complete obedience should mean cruellest death. All the time there is perfect soberness and sanity, no blind enthusiasm, no ecstaticism, nor mere mysticism, but, while His sense of sonship is such that He can speak of God as "*My* Father" with a special confidence, He yet stands in a truly human relationship with other men, eating and drinking, rejoicing and sorrowing with them, sharing their life, seeking ever to serve and heal and help, and with such a clear intelligence as made Him the supreme Teacher of all the Ages, "the Light of the World," still, after all these centuries, shining on it, eclipsing all others as the noontide sunlight eclipses the brightest stars.

His possession by a higher Spirit than His own—even the all-creative Spirit of God—is so manifest in His life that it becomes a revelation of the reality of a higher Order than the natural, and of a human life therein. And, of course, it was *God* who was the Revealer:

Jesus was the channel or medium of the revelation; yet, apart from such a channel, wholly responsive to God, the revelation could not have been given.

He sought to bring His disciples to the same faith in God as *their* Father, to the same complete devotion to His cause and service, to the same trust in His perfect wisdom and goodness, to the same acceptance of His will, to belief in His regard for them personally, and to trust in His forgiveness even though they knew themselves to be desperate sinners, telling them that there was "joy in the presence of the angels"—joy in the heart of God—"over one sinner that repented."

"*Our Father*" is a familiar Name for most of us, learned at our mother's knee, repeated from time to time in prayer along with others—"Our Father who art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name." *But is it real to us?* Do we actually, in our inmost heart, believe that God is our Father and the Father of all men? If we really believe it, then we know that we and all men are created for a higher life than that of Nature merely, and with a nobler destiny than Time can show, that all men are our brothers, equally cared for by our Father, to be loved by us as He loves all, to whom we are to stand related and act towards as the children of the one all just, all good Father of all men. It is this Faith carried out in the daily life that brings and extends the Reign of God in the present and fits us for the inheritance of the Eternal Kingdom. If we do not really so believe in God, we do not really believe in Christ. "God" and "Christ" are only *names* to us—fetishes, perhaps, not Real Beings. If the Christianity which has its sole foundation in the fatherly love of God falls, our highest hopes perish. We have no Divine Ideal either for Time or for Eternity to lighten our darkness and guide our faltering and

stumbling feet into the way of peace and true life. Everything depends at last on *what God is*. If He is a real Father we can be sure that He means good for us all and will do His utmost that it may be ours, if we will only be truly His children. Christ's confidence in the reality of the Eternal Kingdom rested in His confidence in God as the Father of men.

IV

CAN WE STILL BELIEVE IN GOD AS OUR FATHER?

CHAPTER IV

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AS we have seen, the Gospel of Christ was based on the fact that man was created to be a son to God, with a destiny beyond Time and Sense, to which, however, he must rise by renouncing the world and the merely nature-self as dominant, so that God and His will may be supreme in the life. He did not teach, as later theology did, that men living the life of Nature merely were under Divine condemnation; but that, unless they chose a higher life, they were in danger of losing the life God had created them for, and that persistence in adherence to a lower self would debar them from that Eternal Kingdom in which alone man's true Good could be found, and would lay them open to self-operative penalties. But at the same time He assured them that God was drawing nigh to all in forgiving love, seeking His lost and wandering children, so that, turning to God, no one need be excluded from the Kingdom of eternal Good.

Thus, whatever might be the sources of the forms on which His Gospel of the Kingdom rested, the deepest ground of His confidence was (as we have seen) *the Fatherhood of God*, and it is practical belief in the God manifested in Christ that is the greatest need of our time.

The question we would face now is an important

one for the mind of to-day, namely, *Can we still believe in God as our Father?*

I. BELIEF IN GOD

It is widely felt to-day that the question is not so much whether there is a God as *what* God is in relation to ourselves. As the late Professor Calderwood put it: "The reality of the Divine existence is a truth so plain that it needs no proof, as it is a truth so high that it admits of none." It is a natural or instinctive belief, "supported by reference to finite existence thereby explained" (*Handbook of Moral Philosophy*, p. 228).

Still, as the validity of the belief may be questioned and doubts suggested, it may be desirable to glance at the preliminary question, *Can we still believe in a living God at all?* In past years this question was keenly agitated by certain representatives of Physical Science. But its pressure from that side has become greatly lessened. Science itself seems to be approaching a spiritual basis and the old "conflict between Science and Religion" in that form is passing away.

The New Psychology and God

But a new *Mental* Science has arisen, and has raised the old question in a new form. The New Psychology has rendered the great service of giving to *Mind* an objective existence such as it never before was seen to have, and has exhibited its inherent foundations and laws in such a way as would seem to make for belief in Mind as first and supreme, and thus to support belief in God as the primal Mind. But by some of its

representatives our Ideal of God is regarded as being only a projection from ourselves, whether as belonging to the " herd," or as giving expression to our individual " ethical self." " It cannot be doubted," says Mr. A. G. Tansley in *The New Psychology and its Relation to Life* (p. 161), " that God has been a necessity to the human race, that He is still a necessity and will long continue to be." (Jung also speaks of the danger that lies in " repression " of religion.) At the same time the God we believe in is only the product of our Projection and Idealism. We are like the Indian Juggler who climbs up the rope he himself has thrown into the air (Tansley, pp. 159, 162, etc.).

Assuming both Projection and Idealism to be normal exercises of the human mind, although they may be sometimes exercised unwarrantably, the conclusion sought to be drawn from their exercise by no means follows. Projection is defined as " the attributing of part of the contents of our own mind to outside entities." It is assumed that the entities themselves are also mere projections. But there may be very good grounds for belief in them. To say that they are always imaginary is to contradict actual experience, and, in the case before us, is to beg the whole question of the existence of God.

Freud classes all our religious beliefs as " Superstition," and compares their derivation to the (pathological) action of paranoiacs, who ascribe to outside entities thoughts and feelings, etc., which belong to themselves. " When human beings began to think they were obviously compelled to explain the outer world in an anthropomorphic sense by a multitude of personalities in their own image, the actions which they explained superstitiously were thus actions and expressions of persons. In that regard they behaved

just like paranoiacs, who draw conclusions from imperfect signs which others give them."

It is, no doubt, true that men were impelled to project outwardly what they knew existed in themselves, and to explain the outer world anthropomorphically. But this in itself was a perfectly natural and normal action, and may have had realities answering to it, yet to be more truly conceived, and the belief supported by valid reasons. When we see human beings in general believing in Beings superior to themselves, we cannot think that all were afflicted with paranoia. There is no proof given of the assertions made. We cannot regard them as " scientific."

Jung, another leading authority (apparently frankly Atheistic on other grounds), regards men as the consequence of failure to attain what they craved for, including a sense of security, *regressing* into an infantile condition, and for their relief projecting from their " father-complex " (experience of parental care) an ideal Parent in the Unseen. Again no proof is given ; but it is not improbable that this may have been one source of belief in God. It may have led them to Reality. It was natural for men as " the offspring of God," in the infancy of the race " to feel after " an unseen Father, " if haply they might find Him."

That there is more than merely projection from ourselves, that there is Reality to be met with, may appear from what Tansley says of " the Ethical Ideal." There is something in the Universe—something above and beyond ourselves—that calls and moves us to follow the highest and best that we know, irrespective of the immediate interests of the lower self or of " the herd." The reality of this higher Ideal is described as " the Ethical self," to which we must at

all cost be true (p. 195, etc.). "It is the highest authority in conduct, necessary to moral freedom" (p. 216). Its morality is higher than that of "the herd." But does the call to follow it come from ourselves merely? Do *we* originate this higher Ideal and give it its authority? It appears within us and wins us for itself; but does it not come from beyond and above us, with inherent authority over us? Does it not belong to our *life*, and, therefore, to the creative process operative on us and in us? Our "ethical self" is created through "the experience of life and the sublimation of our primitive instincts." What is said of the love of Truth applies here also. It is "a secondary creation, fashioned and consolidated in the fire of life by the interplay of the instinctive forces of the mind with the facts of experience." But is not this a truly *creative* work, in virtue of which we are being raised into a higher and fuller life by a Power above ourselves, even that to which we owe our being?

We, therefore, *rightly* project the Ethical Ideal and regard its source as God. It is *there* in us, as a Reality over us, the Supreme Reality for us all, and the most productive of the highest values for the Universe. Human history has been that of man's gradual moral and spiritual elevation. That spiritual inspiration can enter our minds, and spiritual Calls come to us from beyond ourselves are facts of daily experience. And if we personalise the ultimate Ethical Reality and enter into union therewith, as something in our nature impels us to do, we shall find how real it is and how helpful it can be to us. This, and this alone, gives the mind that feeling of harmony and satisfaction which it is affirmed we are constituted and constrained to seek.

We have a nature with certain fundamental instincts. Certain complexes come to be formed, which in their normal action lead to a greater fulness of life as a necessity for the life of " the herd " (the not very elevated term for human life in common, " sociality " would surely be better), and this morality rises in character as man's life develops till we have an " ethical self " in an immediate relation to a supreme authority formed within ourselves, which makes this authority felt within us. Gods, and ultimately a God and Creator over all, come to be believed in, and man's conception of the Divine character grows with man's own moral advance. Is not this simply *the normal course of human evolution* ? Are we not in so regarding it following scientific and rational lines ? Real Science can never conflict with religion ; for all Science is rational, and the rational is the Divine.

Some competent critics of the New Psychology, however, hold that the cases of " projection " founded on are *abnormal* and cannot be rightly used in explanation of that which arises naturally and normally in man, and is practically universal. Dr. W. Brown, of Oxford University, holds that " while the phenomenon of projection is an undoubted fact which can be verified in certain cases, these cases are all pathological. . . . We can discover how they arose, and in every case we find that they are due to some definitely abnormal process. Hence, to generalise and use the pathological conception of projection in dealing with normal psychology is an illegitimate use of the concept " (quoted from *The New Psychology and Religion*, by Dr. W. B. Selbie, p. 296).

Dr. Selbie says : " They confuse God with the idea of God—and make it a projection of man's hopes, fears, and ideals. . . . The real question at issue is not

merely, How does the human mind work in relation to religion and the idea of God? but, Is there a God, and have religious ideas any objective reality?" "It is," he says, "an attempt to explain religion which really explains it away, and the air of scientific assurance with which it is done makes it very convincing to untutored minds" (p. 297). (See further in Dr. Brown's recently published lecture on "Psychology and Medicine," in *Psychology and the Sciences*.)

As we have seen, it is held by some that the idea of a Father-God is a projection from a "father-complex" within ourselves. Why should it not be so, if there be such a complex as normal? Is it not possible that, instead of all human beings acting abnormally, which is surely improbable, there is a natural and normal feeling for and movement towards a higher unseen, creative Fatherhood:

> "Like plants in mines that never saw the sun,
> But dream of him and guess where he may be,
> And do their best to climb and get at him"?

Dr. Berguer affirms that humanity in every child recognises (sub-consciously?) not only its earthly descent, but also another origin that is mysterious and *quasi*-Divine; it is always struggling between these two descents—Humanity can only attain to its true life by (like the hero in the legend) finding again its true Father—the Divine Father (*op. cit.* pp. 128, 129). Jesus said that we must become as little children if we would enter the Kingdom and know God as the gracious Father that He is.

As a philosopher, the late Sir Henry Jones boldly asserted in his Gifford Lectures that one of the strongest reasons for believing in God is just what we find within our own selves: "Man's idea of God is derived

mainly from his interpretation of his own nature and needs" ; " God is man's Refuge from himself" ; " strength as against his own weakness, purity as against his own sinfulness, the fulness of plenty as against his own imperfection." In the pursuit of the higher life that calls us authoritatively there is very much in ourselves, in " the herd," and in our experience in the world in general, to contend with, and there is an innate feeling that there is that in the Universe which is perfect and can meet all our needs—a sense that " God's greatness flowed around our incompleteness, round our restlessness His rest."

A Perfect Being and Evolution

But there are those who maintain that we cannot postulate a Perfect Being as the Source of the Universe. Evolution, it is said, requires a beginning with the simplest elements ; with an advancing complexity, and, since *progress* must be maintained, the idea of a Perfect Being at the beginning is deemed by them impossible. But these same " simplest elements " did not originate themselves, and there cannot be an evolution of *nothing*. Moreover, this world in which we can to some extent observe evolution and progress is but a mere fraction of the great creative process, which is eternal. In the Universe *as a whole* there never was this separate simplicity. We can never get back to an absolute beginning. We cannot tell what was contained in that which used to be described as the indefinitely extended " fire-mist " which, gradually contracting, became the central sun from which the planets broke off, and our own world was gradually formed under the action of " natural laws." Professor Alexander's " Space-Time " does not meet the

necessity. It is a question whether Space and Time have in themselves any objective or substantial existence; if not, there can never arise the *movement* supposed to be found in their interaction. It may be quite true to say that there can be no Space without Time, for Space implies movement, and there can be no Time without Space as that in which the movement is made. But there can be no movement without *something that moves*, or is moved—something substantial. Time itself cannot move, for there is no Time till there is *movement*. The creation of something substantial is therefore implied; it is implied before we can think of either Time or Space. What that something is, and how it comes to be, is the real question.[1]

Science says it is the *ether* or its equivalent. But what is the ether and how comes it to be there? Still more, *whence* its wonderful powers? How does it happen to be of such a constitution or nature as that its motions result in the rationally ordered world crowned by rational man? Behind the ether, or within it, or imparted to it, there must be that which can have this consummation. The problem can never be solved by the idea of something which has in it these possibilities, yet is self-created. If Reason is manifest in the process and in the outcome, there must have been Reason in some way present in the beginning and dominating the whole process. Christianity affirms *Love* (which is practically the same thing as

[1] "I think of Him (God) as creating out of, yet within Himself something—the wing of a fly would be enough, and thereby establishing a relation, the germ of the Kingdom of Love. Motion, time, and space follow automatically when the two points are established. Their separateness implies space. The relation between them implies motion, and motion from point to point implies time" (Mrs. Daniel Merriman, *Hibbert Journal* for July 1924, p. 731).

Plato's idea of the Good) as the Source ; not a blind but a rational and purposeful Love, which (in some way *we* cannot understand) because of its nature as Love, in order to find self-expression and for the sake of the creation, so far materialises itself. To reach again the highest, God must begin at the lowest. We are carried back to a self-imparting infinite Love.

Again, the origin is sometimes ascribed to *Life*. But Life, as we know it, is not the only form of life in the Universe. It is a derivative life that we know —an imperfect and growing form of Life, with an ideal of perfection before it, implying an Eternal and perfect Life imparting itself to finite forms, and does not in the least interfere with progress ; on the contrary, it implies progress towards the goal of infinite Perfection.

II. BELIEF IN GOD AS OUR FATHER

Let us now pass to the specifically Christian question—*Can we still believe in God as our Father ?*

We need not go back to discuss earlier ideas of God. It is widely acknowledged that man has always been a " religious " being ; he has always believed in some Power or Powers beyond himself on which he was more or less dependent. His conception of their nature rose in correspondence with his own progress. It was a slow progress, and with many it is still far from complete. But in one particular line—that represented by the Bible—a *moral*, and ultimately a unitive conception of the Supreme Power was reached. It was conceived as Personal, absolutely righteous, but also merciful, the Father of His people. The culmination was reached in Christ, by whom God was conceived and revealed as the holy and loving

Father of all men. No higher conception has ever been suggested, or can be imagined, although there is always a tendency to fall beneath it.

Nor need we consider here the various philosophical arguments for belief in God, however valuable many of these may be. Belief in the God and Father of Jesus was not something to be reached by a long course of argument; He was, Jesus said, everywhere present in Spirit, and we only needed to turn in our hearts to Him in order to find Him real in our experience. It was by faith, not by reasoning, men could find God. Jesus taught that we do not need to seek for God; it is God who is seeking us; we find Him when we let Him *find ourselves*. It is *He* who is seeking *us*. None of the arguments employed to establish the Divine existence can give a permanent satisfaction, however strong they may seem, and may really be, when we read them. Yet by a simple act of child-like faith, and under many different forms of intellectual belief, the ancient statements are found to be true: "I am found of them that seek Me"; "When ye seek Me with your whole heart I will be found of you." It would be a pity for the great mass of human beings were it otherwise.

The arguments referred to are, however, very useful in view of opposition to the belief and in support of Faith. In this view some reasons will be here suggested for our belief in the reality of God as our Father, and certain difficulties met.

The Belief of Jesus Christ

One of the best reasons for our believing in God as our Father is the fact that *Jesus so believed*. As we have seen, faith in God as Father was the founda-

tion on which everything in His life rested. And *what do we see in that life?*

(1) By almost universal consent, on the part of all who know it, we behold the highest type of personal life ever lived on this earth. All that men reckon as having supreme value is there: absolute sincerity, Truth to the uttermost, Goodness unparalleled, Love without limit, kindness, gentleness, humility, self-conquest, yet manly self-assertion, loyalty to convictions at all cost, courage to face opponents and to denounce the false and wrong at whatever risk, readiness to sacrifice life itself in fidelity to Truth and Duty, and for the sake of others—every quality that goes to make a noble and heroic yet loving life. In a word, we see man in entire union with God. As we shall see more fully hereafter, we have, indeed, the Fatherhood of God revealed in a life of perfect Sonship.

Our life, if it is to be worthy, must be based on some adequate foundation, and is not the fact that this faith on God as Father was the basis of that Divinely human life of Christ, who could not, as being human, *see* any more than we can see, but walked by faith as we must do, one of the best of reasons for making the same faith the basis of *our* lives? This so far as concerns the individual. But

(2) It was *the most beneficent life for the world* that it has ever had in it. From that life of Jesus, culminating in the Cross of self-sacrifice, a power entered the world which made it largely a new world. A truer ideal of Life took possession of men's souls, a new and higher spirit entered them, a deathless Hope filled their hearts, God became real to them as never before, His character was elevated in their thoughts, He was known to be *Love* and at one with them. Before the new Spirit of Love which

breathed itself into their souls, egoism with all its works was bound to fall, or be transformed into an altruism from which a very different kind of works should proceed; it was a Spirit capable of bringing to an end all separations and of making of all "one new man." This was the fruit of a life standing, in spite of all that was against it, firmly rooted in the Fatherhood of God. If *we* would live so as to help the world we belong to, and become fit for life in *any* world, do we not find in this faith of Christ the secret of its possibility, and in the Spirit of Christ, which is that of sonship, receive the inspiration and power so to live? It was because men lost that faith that Christianity fell from its high Ideal, to which only this same faith can restore it.

Inability to Believe

Yet, notwithstanding all that we see in Christ, some say that they cannot so believe. The world Jesus lived in and the mental atmosphere He breathed were so different from ours. He lived long before the modern conception of evolution was formulated or even definitely conceived, and could quote with acceptance the Genesis account of man's origin. It was long after His time that the Copernican theory of the Universe was reached, and this world, over which in Jesus' day Heaven was outspread, seen to be but, as it were, a tiny speck in measureless space peopled by Innumerable worlds, or even Universes. "Laws" and powers of Nature are known to-day of which men of old time had no conception. There is also much in the world that *seems* inconsistent with the idea of a loving Creator and Father of men, much suffering in both the animal and the human world,

things constantly happening which we cannot reconcile with a fatherly rule or a kind Providential care, or with such a relationship to God as Jesus declared man to hold.

But it must be remembered that the fatherly rule is not yet complete ; it only grows towards completion as the reign of God extends in men's hearts ; and its consummation lies beyond Time and Sense.

Jesus was by no means blind to these adverse things, living, as He did, in a land where, and at a time when, evil was rampant and oppression abounded. He referred these, largely at least, to a power of Evil working against God, whom He had to meet and conquer, even by death. But *we* may be unable so to explain them. But His Gospel was that of God's provision of deliverance from all evils and of the ultimate Eternal triumph of good.

Nor should it be forgotten that Jesus was not alone in thinking of God as Father. Belief in God was not, as already said, the result of arguments, but was a natural intuition, and it seems to have been equally natural to think of Him as source and Father. " Heaven-Father " was one of the oldest names of God, and on the part of not a few of the thinkers of ancient Greece He was so regarded. When Epictetus speaks of our " having God for our Maker and Father and Guardian," and of what this ought to do for us, Jesus would have said he was " not far from the Kingdom." For others in Jesus' own nation God was already Father, but there had never been such sonship as His.

Science certainly has introduced us to a much greater world ; it has brought us face to face with the Infinite, and has delivered us from many childish and from some unworthy thoughts of God. It has made intensely real the old question of Job, " Canst thou

by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" But it has not done anything to weaken our belief in the reality of God. On the contrary, we are made to feel that God *is* Reality in the highest and widest sense of the term. Science has immensely enlarged and ennobled our conception of God. And if He is greater in the reach of His creative thought, He is at the same time richer in His Love.

A well-known Astronomer has recently said: "God remains unknowable by the very perfection of Nature's mechanism. . . . The human mind cannot comprehend the infinite, eternal, immutable Spirit, the organising power of that ALL of which the earth and man are but particles as imperfect as they are mediocre." Yet, "His existence is proved by the universal organisation. Every thing is organised, from the tiniest leaf to the world-system. An invisible, immaterial element of a spiritual nature, as yet imperfectly revealed by our means of investigation, manifests itself within us and around us. This spiritual principle should be revered as enveloping the world and enfolding us" (Flammarion, *The Thoughts of an Astronomer*, p. 28). But we could not revere that Spirit unless we believed It to be wholly *Good*.

This is the same thing as to say that in one all-creating, all-embracing, all-controlling, ever-present aspect, God is manifested in *the Reason* which pervades the Universe, in obedience to which every event, bright or dark, in our experience, happens—according to unvarying Cause and Consequence, man's interaction with which in the world around him has made him a rational being, although he may not always choose to follow Reason. And if, in one aspect, God be the infinite, all-working Reason, He is also the

perfectly Good as the perfectly rational must be; in other words, He is the Love which in the onward movement of Reason becomes, as its expression, manifested in human relationships, which also in the human heart becomes all-embracing. If we think of God as the Infinite and Eternal Reason and Love, creating and acting in the only ways possible to perfect Reason and Love, we shall find nothing to contradict our thought of Him as Real and Good, but everything to support it. In a perfect Reason and Love there is contained all that belongs to *Fatherhood*.[1]

But God is not *personally* present and acting in Nature, as the happenings in Nature clearly show. It is in His Holy Spirit that God is everywhere present, the inspiration and spiritual environment of our higher life as that of sonship to Himself.

Nature can only tell us about God in so far as God can express Himself therein, and as we interpret it aright. In *man* He can find a completer organ of expression. In man, true to the highest and best that moves him and gives character to his life, we can know more of that which the all-creative Spirit is than we can gather from Nature. There is much in Nature that speaks of God, but much also that seems, at first sight at any rate, contradictory. It is not that God

[1] In *Christian Theism and a Spiritual Monism* (1906), it was sought to be shown from actual facts that there is in everything a spiritual element deepest and dominant, even in "matter," rising in its manifestation through vegetable and animal life, revealing itself as Mind and Love in man, and that this all-working power is that of God as He has conditioned Himself for the Creation. It is deeper than the "vital."

In an interesting report by Dr. Tudor Jones of the Convention of Philosophers at Milan (1924), in the *British Weekly* of 19th June 1924, the reality of a spiritual element in all nature is said to have been so widely recognised by representatives of Science and Philosophy that a great religious, even a Christian, revival may be looked for.

comes into being, or is created in the course of the world's development (as some have it), but that He comes into increasing *manifestation* as possibilities for it arise.

It is with man that religion begins; only in man does the thought of God arise, and a feeling towards that which is supreme awaken.

Early religion, Professor Pringle-Pattison has said, does not arise out of Cosmological speculations about the origin of the world or the making of man, but was due to a sense of kinship with the tribal gods, which was expressed by various forms in the social life. This already seems to point to Divine Fatherhood. There is at least a dim sense of relationship to a Supreme. We cannot think of God as the *Father* of the animals or of our bodies merely; but the fact that man is not only body but is a personal spirit, which the body only serves, that he can rise in thought to God, aspire after Him, and can only rest when he finds Him, point to the relationship of Fatherhood and Sonship.

The Source of our Being

The simplest, and to my mind the surest, and, in face of all doubts and difficulties, the most abiding ground of belief in God as our Father is to think of Him as *the Source of our being*, the Creator of the nature we possess.

If God is the Source of our being, which He certainly is, since we did not come from nothing and did not create ourselves—if God is the responsible Source of the creation or evolution (with its environment) which is crowned by man, what better or truer thought of Him can we have than that of "*our Father*"? It was as the source of creation that Jesus thought of

God—not a distant Source, or far-away First Cause, or Prime-Mover, but a present and constant Source, caring for His children, always near and accessible to them, with them in the prayer-chamber, knowing the things we have need of before we ask Him, seeking ever to raise us into a higher, fuller life of sonship to Himself, moving in us creatively by His Spirit.

Despite the many things I do not know and must be content not to know, of one thing I am as sure as I am of my own existence, that I did not create myself and that I did not come from nothing. There must be a greater than myself to whom I owe my existence, an adequate source of my being, which can account for all that I am and all that I can be, through the constant working of whose power, or the evolution of whose thought, I and all men find ourselves here, —who, let me say reverently, is responsible for our being here, and, I believe, holds Himself responsible, but not apart from our own co-operation with Him. The old axiom, *ex nihilo nihil* (out of nothing nothing can come), stands sure and irrefutable—an axiom by the implications of which Dr. Cudworth (who in his *Intellectual System* expounds it fully) tells us many of the ancient thinkers were led to believe in God, as many of the moderns might well be also. We see the all-creative power manifested in some degree in everything, and it is never absent from us, forming the world and ourselves, building up body and brain to be the servants of *Mind*—of the spiritual self that I am. Whence comes this wonderful Mind in man—this indwelling Intelligence or Knowledge? Not from "matter," which can know nothing and do nothing of itself but only as it is the instrument or expression of the all-working Power. My Mind is something of that same Power *organised* in me. Otherwise, how

can I know anything? How can I (and to some extent all conscious creatures) so naturally, invariably, without any effort whatever, translate the vibrations that come to our brains from the otherwise dark and silent world around us, into the perceptions that make the world alive and full of meaning for us, except we share in some degree in the Mind of God?[1] No Scientist and no Philosopher has in any other way explained this, a fundamental life-experience; it is the most wonderful thing in the Creation.

"On all sides," says Dr. Max Nordeau, "the most urgent and disquieting questions arise. Above all, the fundamental question, the most disquieting of all, "How is an external stimulus, that is, a movement, a vibration, converted into a sensation, a perception?" (*Morals and the Evolution of Man*, p. 110). It is something of the universal Mind—something of God in me—suggesting the idea of a "pre-established harmony," or, rather, a spiritual side to matter from the first (see *Christian Theism and a Spiritual Monism*), and the truth of Malebranche's saying, that we "see all things in God," confirming my feeling of relationship to the one Source of all things, who seeks to raise us into a yet higher even a free and moral sonship to Himself, imparting not only a share in His intelligence but in His moral nature.

I am further sure that the Power that has formed me thus is not distant from me, but present with and within me, working still creatively. The Reason that

[1] We do not *now* require to make these translations individually, as if for the first time; it is something we inherit as belonging to the Creation. But how did they originally come to be made by animals as well as by man, unless there was something of the Divine Intelligence in some mysterious way imparted to, or implicit in, the Creation—*Mind* as well as matter and Life—something of God's own knowledge relative to the material aspect of the Creation?

is manifested everywhere is creating in me the desire for fuller knowledge of Itself and for fuller union with It in my life—the Reason which in its highest expression in life shows Itself as Love. In the creative Source of my life this Love makes Itself known to me as the supreme law I ought to obey, and seeks to win me for Itself, will give me no peace till it so wins me. Only by faith therein and response thereto can I have satisfying life. Why should I otherwise trouble myself about these matters at all? Why should I be unable to find even mental rest till I find it in God? That He has not ceased working in me, I know, because of these Ideals that shine within me and those aspirations which would raise me ever *above my present self*, to which all outward experience is made to minister. In a world wherein purpose is manifest everywhere, and where, not physical forces merely, but *ends*, govern developing life, I cannot doubt that there is a purpose in my *life* as well as in my organic formation, that there is also a purpose in the Creation itself, and that I can only be my true self as I work with the creative power, both for the realisation of the ideal of my own life and that of the world. In other words, that I hold myself to be a son to a Divine Father, through whom His work can be carried on towards completion in this world. The Reason and Love that He is seeks me as instrument.

There is an instinctive feeling in men, not only of the existence but of the nearness of God. Else, why almost universal *worship*? Why offer sacrifices or prayer and praise if there is no one *present* to receive them? Only, the Presence is spiritual, not extended in space, but dwelling in that spiritual Realm to which we as embodied *spirits* also belong. It is not the *words* of the various languages of earth that God

hears and responds to, but that which inspires the words. " God is Spirit," and it is only in Spirit He can be truly worshipped. He is *here*, although no eye of flesh can see Him, at once the inspiration and the spiritual environment of our life. As the Psalmist said: " Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid Thy hand upon me—there is not a word in my tongue but Thou, Lord, knowest it altogether "; or, as Jesus: " Pray to thy Father who is with you in secret "; or, as Paul: " He is not far from each one of us: for in Him we live and move and have our being." " Near " is not really the best word:

" For God is never so far off as even to be near;
He is within, the *spirit* is the home He holds most dear."

" One near one is too far."

The vastness of the Universe makes no difference; God is Spirit, and space has no relation to spirit save as spirit may be embodied. Nor does the relative smallness of this world nor the " mediocre " character of man make any difference; because man, even in the depth of his spiritual poverty, can be infinitely more to God than the greatest of material Universes.[1]

[1] Einstein's doctrine of *Relativity* is the latest word in Science. This also tends to support our belief in the Fatherhood of God. As Viscount Haldane said in the conclusion of a lecture on the subject: " We come back to knowledge as the foundation of Reality, to which all else is relative. To this the nature of God must be akin. It is as immanent in Mind and its foundation, and not as something far away in the external Universe, that we should seek Him. That is the highest view in religion and in the poets, and it throws light on the ultimate problem of life and death " (from *Glasgow Herald* Report). In his great book, *The Reign of Relativity*, in which he works out the bearing of the principle in every sphere of thought and experience, he shows the reality of one foundational and universal Mind, in which to some extent we share. If we are sharers in the very Mind of God, then, surely, we ought to think of Him as our Father, and hold ourselves as those who are so related to Him,

Our Ideals

The reality of Divine Fatherhood is witnessed to by the *Ideals* that arise within us, however slow we may be to rise to them. We are finite, yet are for ever transcending our finitude. The "Call of the Infinite" makes itself felt within us. The highest animal can be content with its limitations; man cannot. His soul is never satisfied with all that he can get, though it should be the whole world; there is always the cry and the capacity for more; he can always rise higher than he has reached, can always do better than he has done, can always be better than he is; can ever seek, and in some measure find, new knowledge, and can always "add to his knowledge virtue." However high he may climb and however wide his outlook, his horizon is ever expanding. Perfection is the Ideal that shines before him. Man can sink to the lowest depths of selfishness and shame, but he can also rise to the highest heights of self-sacrifice and glory.

And what is more, these are not *mere* Ideals: their presence in us indicates that of the Reality that inspires them. As Dr. Pringle-Pattison says: "The process of such a life is explicable only through the actual presence within it, or to it, of the Perfection to which it aspires." It is "God immanent in us," as the Ideal is always immanent in the organism, while at the same time always transcendent of it till the Ideal is reached. The familiar phrase: "God created man in His own image" carries all this; it means that God is the Father who has given being to man that he may become in the truest sense His son, and we may be sure

meant to rise to a fuller, moral, and spiritual share in the Divine nature. Immanence does not imply non-transcendence.

that God will never fail to be true to His Fatherhood if man will only seek to be loyal to his Ideal of sonship.

Moreover, to the idea of Fatherhood, especially as conceived by the nation in which Jesus was born, there belongs that of *authority*. Amongst these Ideals there are some that speak to us with an authority such as a father was believed to possess—an authority which we dare not resist or ignore without being self-condemned and deteriorated. They command us in the name of Duty, even, it may be, though obedience should involve the sacrifice of all that is dearest to us. They are ever calling us to a higher life in accordance with the Ideal perceived; we are made to feel the absolute authority over us of perfect Truth and Righteousness, Purity and Love. And not only over ourselves as individuals, but over all men; higher than the morality of "the herd." They show themselves to come from an Infinite ethical Source of our being that causes them to arise within us through our life experience: they are, in the truest sense, creative influences. There are also experiences which make us feel that we are not alone amidst the vastness of material Universes, that there is some One above us and with us who knows us, cares for us, seeks our well-being, who will be our Helper if we will. This unseen spiritual Presence I am entitled to regard as that of a present God and Father, who seeks my answering love and service, and will complete in me that which He has begun.

Not Anthropomorphism

Of course, any *merely* anthropomorphic thought of God must be transcended. He is not just like a human father, an embodied being who can, for that reason,

speak vocally to his children, make them in some sensible way realise his presence, and do for them such things as a true human father is able to do for his children. God is *Spirit*; His communication with us is in Spirit—Spirit to spirit—Spirit within ourselves—and He seeks to act in the world through us His children, in whom He has, so far, found embodiment. If our *human* spirit had no embodiment, what could we possibly do in the way of helping others, speaking to them, or making them realise our presence? Be we ever so anxious, we could do nothing. So, the absence of *external* intervention by God when we might think it was called for, is no reason for doubting His fatherly love and care. Why should *we* feel so keenly the "evils" that call for deliverance? Is it not because there is something of our Father's Spirit in us, moving *us* to do the things that we feel should be done, to show sympathy, to help, to serve, to save, as far as we are able, to carry on and complete the work of God in the world? The Reason and Love that has been working in Nature has become centred in us; it is for us to continue its work, and so be the true "*children of our Father.*" The Spirit that thus moves us is certainly *God within us.* It is man who holds back and fails to act, not God.

Ignorance and Enlightenment

It may be urged that men do not know that they are the sons of God, and that it is even difficult to get some of them to believe it! There are races living in gross ignorance, in barbarism and savagery. But the Divine creative process is not complete; it is educational, and has not ceased. God's Spirit in those who are enlightened moves them to carry the light to

others. It is from others that *we* have received the light. We do not know anything—certainly nothing about God—till we are taught. God in the past had been gradually teaching men (not as an external Pedagogue; for man has been made to learn for himself, and in response to God's working to make himself); but in many ways leading them to higher and truer knowledge of Himself. To *complete* this Divine teaching was what Jesus came to do. It has always been through men whose hearts and minds were open to Him—that is, open to what God really *is*—that God has revealed Himself, and that men's knowledge of God has grown. And He who in former times spoke through saints and prophets has "in these latter days spoken to us in a *Son*." It was because Jesus knew Himself to be a *son*, and lived in communion with God as such and in complete filial obedience to Him, that He could become to us the revelation of the Father and of our own sonship. The knowledge came in the same way as all knowledge of God has come to men.

Difficulties

"But look," it may be said, "at the actual creation, how can we think of the Power that has given existence to all those myriads of creatures, many of them fierce, some poisonous, some treacherous, many fitted with keen weapons of destruction, almost all of them, on land, or in the water, in their natural state, fighting with and preying on each other? Think of the perpetual carnage that goes on in Nature. Or think of the terrible things that occasionally happen in the material world, famines, tempests, hurricanes, earthquakes, tornadoes, causing death and suffering to

thousands. Or think of the miserable condition of many of the lower races of men, of their ignorance, their savagery, their frequent misery. Or, still more serious, think of the higher, more developed races and their experience, of the great civilisations that have risen so high in knowledge and art and have been swept away, or of that which we call 'civilisation' to-day, of the mutual distrust, suspicion, and fear in which so many live, of their strifes and unnatural wars, in which millions are slain, often in the most callous manner, and millions more caused to suffer—maimed, blinded, mentally wrecked; of the ambitions, cruelties, and selfishness of individuals and of nations, of the awful tragedies in human life, of the numberless ways in which 'man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn,' worst of all, of the strifes and martyrdoms and butcheries in the name of religion—in the name of God Himself! How can such things be in a world proceeding from and sustained by a loving God?"

Yes, let us think of it all, remembering, however, that creation is not finished, and that the fatherly rule "the Kingdom" represents is only very partially established as yet. We are viewing the uncompleted work of One who is assumed to be Infinite and Eternal—to have eternity to work in—and whose Omnipotence (which does not mean power to do all that we might think possible)—one with Reason and Love—requires time to work itself out. It is manifestly an unfinished world we live in. But shall the Power that has wrought thus far successfully not be able to complete His work? Has He not counted the cost, and is He not willing to meet it? Has not the incredible beforehand appeared again and again? "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard that the everlasting God, the Lord, the

Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of His understanding." It is possible, for aught we KNOW to the contrary, that the grand Optimism of St. Paul shall yet be realised, and "the creation itself be delivered from the bondage of corruption" under which it groans "into the liberty of the glory of the sons of God," and that the poet's forecast shall be fulfilled:

> "O yet, we trust that somehow good,
> WILL BE THE FINAL GOAL OF ILL,"

in that "far-off Divine event to which the whole creation moves," which is *the perfect Kingdom of the Future*. Is not this, indeed, absolutely *certain* if God is the perfect Reason and Love that we take Him to be—and must be in order to be *God*?

These considerations should prevent us from coming hastily to a hostile conclusion, and even from professing Agnosticism, except in the limited sense in which we must all be Agnostic. But let us face those difficulties which many of us really feel—some of us very keenly. Do not let us rest in a blind belief because it is comfortable, or in any half-belief in God as our Father; for under such conditions we cannot hope to serve His cause, which is also that of ours. Nor can we hope thus to find that verification of our faith in experience which is open to those who sincerely trust God as Father and live to Him as such.

NECESSARY IGNORANCE

There must be much in relation to God and the creation which *we* cannot hope to understand.[1] Whether

[1] Dr. Schweitzer lays it down as a necessary pre-condition that we renounce all hope of understanding—and simply have Faith.

we go by intellect or by intuition we are finite and imperfect, and our experience is limited to created beings and things. Although we may know "matter" as the other side of Spirit, the means of its manifestation and instrument of its working, we cannot conceive how a spiritual Being can create matter, and in the world of our individual vision and experience there may be difficulties we cannot solve. We cannot reach a completely satisfying conception of God and His ways along the lines of reasoning MERELY. We can, indeed, as already said, see Him to be, in one aspect of His Being and working, identical with the all-pervasive and all-working Reason, the Supreme Reason, always greater than it is at any time organised in ourselves, to which we must both appeal and seek to rise, which also in the process of the creation becomes manifested as Love. There is nothing surer than this.

FAITH

But where we cannot see, and whatever line of thought we follow, we must always at last take that step beyond what we can see and understand—the step that is known as *Faith*. To speak of Faith seems to some to weaken our case and to introduce something illegitimate. But Faith is neither contrary to Reason nor an addition to it: it is *Reason itself* in its deepest self and highest exercise, although we cannot put it into words. Not only does Faith, grounded in Reason, rest secure and find its verification in our experience; but such Faith is the highest act of Reason. It is

But is not the suggestion of the title of Sir Henry Jones' Gifford Lecture to be preferred: "*A Faith that Inquires*"? At the same time we must make up our minds that there must be much we cannot fathom, while we may have good reason to trust and obey.

more than Reason—it is the outgoing of the whole self. Without such Faith, *based* on what we can see and positively know, but going beyond it, life, even in earthly relations, would not be possible. We are compelled continually to " walk by Faith," and Faith *well grounded* never disappoints us ; whereas, to fail to have faith when we ought to have it, in human relations, becomes often the source of loss and of much evil, of the most poignant regret and, in moral relations, of shame and remorse, revealing a serious and blameworthy want in our deepest selves, of which we are ashamed. It is the very same kind of faith we are asked to have in the reality and fatherly goodness of God in spite of much that we cannot " see " or intellectually explain or understand, and similar consequences follow from the presence or absence of this Faith. This is proved in the experience of men. What we *do* see should enable us to *trust*, and it is thus we honour God and show ourselves to be His children.[1]

But to have faith does not mean that we are to shut our eyes to all disturbing facts and just go blindly on. It is only where reasoning carries us so far, but cannot carry us farther, that we are entitled to have *Faith*. Those who have gone so far on as to be able to exercise a rational faith may rightly trust God in the face of

[1] As Dr. L. P. Jacks remarks in his suggestive book, *Religious Perplexities*, " Religion has sometimes been represented as introducing a new faculty called ' faith ' into the man's life, as adding faith to the reason he had before, or perhaps as driving reason out and putting faith in its place. This is a misconception. Faith is neither a substitute for reason nor an addition to it. Faith is nothing else than reason grown courageous—reason raised to its highest power, expanded to its widest vision. Its advent marks the point where the hero within the man is getting the better of the coward, where safety, as the prime object in life, is losing its charm, and another object, hazardous but beautiful, dimly seen but deeply loved, has begun to tempt the awakened soul " (p. 21).

all that is outward ; may say with Job, " Though He slay me yet will I trust Him " ; but others must " see reason " for the exercise of faith—they must be able to say, " We have reason to believe," although they may be unable to formulate that reason as they might a logical proof or demonstration.

Fatherhood in Creation

While God is our Father as the Source of our being we cannot expect to see His *Fatherhood* manifested in Nature merely. The ethical qualities of God cannot be manifested where there is no ethical nature capable of expressing them. Still, when we think of the gradual evolution of the world as Science reveals it—first, the earth formed to be the abode of man, furnished with everything necessary for his sustenance and progressive life, surrounded by an atmosphere exactly adapted to sustain his physical life, a change in the constitution of which would have made life impossible ; then, in due time, life itself appearing and gradually rising till man is reached, who finds himself *in a school* in which he learns through experience, often hard enough, but essential to the making of man—is it not *very like* the action of a Father, preparing a home for his children which shall also be *a school* in which they shall be trained and raised thereby into ever higher life, in that only way of *experience* in which manhood is gained ; for

" Life is not as idle ore,
But iron, dug from central gloom,
And heated hot with burning fears.
And dipt in baths of hissing tears,
And battered with the shocks of doom
To shape and use."

This is not mere poetry, but stern fact. It may seem a hard way, and men did not understand its meaning; but it was the *only way* of raising man, first from formless life, then out of lower forms of life into man destined to be the child and heir of God. The wonderful thing is that the creative process is one in which we are made largely to make ourselves. It is the self-realisation in us of that in God which became the principle of the world's life, and could only be found in accordance with the nature of the various elements that come into being and operation—matter, life, self-consciousness, freedom, etc. All the while God was not absent, but, in some real sense, in it all. Nor has the method ceased, as many find in their experience. But we may fail to see that it is God still making us, and may think of Him as failing to care for us.

No eye can see God, but no more can any eye see the ether which has surrounded us and been within us, all unknown to us, for millions of years; only quite recently we began to realise its presence and discover something of its marvellous powers. Some day the world may also discover *God* as the *spiritual* inspiration and environment of our life, and find out what *He* can do for us as we come into right relation to Him and are open to the working of His power, just as we find out what the ether can do when we put ourselves into right relation to it. If in some degree God is immanent in Nature and in ourselves, He also transcends His creation and is its spiritual environment, as is so finely described in the 139th Psalm.[1]

[1] Of this Psalm, Dr. Denney has said in words well worth quoting: "Nothing ever impressed me so much as an argument for Theism as the first verse of the 139th Psalm. A man is incapable of judging anything, if he does not feel that it expresses the most real experience of which human nature is capable: '*Thou* hast searched me and known me'—and if he does not feel that the *Thou* is just

The creative working of God has continued till man has been formed a spiritual being, which implies that something of His own Spirit—something of Himself — belongs to, has become implanted, in the depths of our nature, and rises in us however far we may be from being true to it. Those who have had to do with criminals tell us, *e.g.* Sir Basil Thomson from his experience of Dartmoor, that there is no man wholly bad, or without something of good in him. If there are any wholly bad, they are abnormal. Experience shows that there is no one so sunk in sin, or even in vice and crime, who cannot have the Divine spark that is in him kindled into the flame of the spirit and life of a son of God. There are thousands of illustrations of this great truth, as mission workers at home and abroad can testify, and it is on this indubitable witness to man's sonship that the hope of humanity rests, and the possibility, not only of a Kingdom, but of a Family of God, whether on the earth or beyond it. It is the work of the Christian Church to proclaim to all men the reality of their sonship, and to seek by all means to raise them to it in the fulness of its truth. In this way the work that Christ began, and for the sake of which He laid down His life, will tend to be accomplished.

Difficulties Continued

With respect to the difficulties which many of us feel: if our greater modern knowledge and heightened feeling have made these more manifest, our increased

as real and personal as the *me*. Only God can prove His being and His personality and His character to man, and He proves all these in the first instance by experiences like this" (*Letters to Sir W. R. Nicoll*, p. 80).

knowledge has also enabled us to see, to some extent at least, the way out of them. Science has shown us that we are not to think of God as *directly* creating all those various forms of living creatures, or as immediately inspiring their actions. *Life*, once it comes into action, must act according to its nature *as Life*, always seeking and finding expression according to its environment, and always maintaining itself according to its needs and opportunities. If we cannot conceive *how* Spirit creates matter, no more can we imagine how Life originated—if it had an origin in time at all, and is not, as some believe, like matter, an ultimate. Life is not God. It is not in itself a moral, or even a conscious, agent, although in its operations it manifests, or *seems* to manifest, intelligence. It is not in itself an *entity*, although we constantly speak of it as if it were such; it only appears when the conditions are there, and ceases to appear where they are absent, *e.g.* an egg or a seed. It is something CAUSED and serving a higher purpose. We know it to have been always, on the whole, progressive in the past, rising higher without any consciousness of it in organisms, but as if in obedience to some higher Will, till man is reached, just as unconscious matter serves higher purposes. The forms of life which create the difficulty that we feel in view of them are not the final forms, but those reached on the way towards higher forms, *ultimating* in man. They are forms that, in the nature of Life in its environment, necessarily appeared, and were left behind; many of them, in spite of other aspects, serving useful purposes in the creation, and not a few ministering to man. We can only think of them as inevitably appearing in the course of the onward progress of life towards man.

There is now no longer a steady upward rise and

onward progress of life, physically, or as it has become organised in man. Man has a self-consciousness that can act from itself, can oppose whatever upward-lifting influences may bear upon him, may develop intellectually, so as to meet increasing needs to a high degree, yet be indifferent to higher moral and truly human advancement—such as we witness in ancient Egypt and other civilisations that have disappeared. And it is from men who remain in this condition, with their animal nature unsubdued or unsublimated, that the evils man works on his fellow-men—oppressions, cruelties, wars, and such-like—proceed, not by any means from God, who leaves man in the freedom that is essential to manhood, and cannot in any forcible way lift him above himself, because *he would not then be man.*

As in the case of the lower animals, these " evils " are the outcome of a nature above which higher influences have failed to raise men. In his misdirected liberty of choice, not yet by any means real freedom, man may take a way of his own and act in direct opposition to all that is of God, entailing evil consequences on his fellow-men and on himself. These come inevitably in the unbroken action of the Reason that God is always operating as Cause and Consequence. As for the tragedies in human life, how many of these would be avoided if the Fatherhood of God were a vital belief, and the life for self merely transcended ! But the fact that some men can be brought to see that, while thus dominated by their lower nature, they are not really free, and can be raised into the " freedom of the sons of God," shows their possession of a higher ideal nature.

Many lower races have not yet reached full manhood ; they are ignorant of God and of their true

selves and need to be taught and elevated. This, again, is inevitable, and it is a remarkable testimony to our relation to God how open many to whom the Missionary goes are to instruction, and how high, under proper influences, they can be raised, even to conscious sonship to God and real human brotherhood. Man was not created in a day, nor in ten thousand years, and God our Father was ever bringing influences to bear on men, which, so far as they were responsive to them, tended to raise them into a higher manhood. Bergson represents Life as ever seeking to introduce itself into matter, so may we not think of Spirit as constantly seeking to introduce itself into life as it had culminated in man. God is free Spirit, not to be confused with His works, but always transcending what He has done and ever moving in His Creation to something higher. His creative work in man has not ceased, but is meant to operate in greater power through those who have been responsive to it. It is for man to teach and raise his fellow-men into their full life as God's children: the lower they are, the louder the call; in this way the Divine creative work is carried on in and by man, true to his essential nature as a son of God.

What is true of Life as Life, acting according to its nature or the necessary "laws of Life," is, of course, also true of the action of "Matter" as embodied in the physical realm. It is the working of those "laws" that upholds the world, bringing us all the material good we enjoy. It may also bring "evils" on individuals and communities; yet, if there is to be a stable world-order, it can never be other than it is, except in so far as man can modify it and guard himself against what it would be "evil" for him to suffer: its action is always rational and inevitable in relation

to the whole. And the present world does not represent the final purpose of God as the Father of men.

III. THE WITNESS OF HUMAN FATHERHOOD

The Fatherhood of God is witnessed to us by *our own human fatherhood.* There is nothing higher than the love manifested by a true human father, or, perhaps, still more completely, by a devoted mother. There we witness a love that rises entirely above self, the love

> "That seeketh not herself to please,
> The love that conquers all."

Whence has that love come and expressed itself in man? It is the result of the gradual rise in organisms of that which is deepest of all *in the Creation.*

All that is best in me must be in its essence in some form in the Source of my being, and comes in the course of the onward working of the one Power that "works all in all." It is the very same Power as that which has formed the Earth and works in all Nature, only a higher form of it. The stream cannot rise above its source; the greater can never come from the lesser in itself as its origin; there is always something that raises it; in that which produces there must be, *in some form,* the fulness of all that is or can be produced. This is illustrated *in all evolution.* We see it every day before our eyes in the quickening and development of the seed. From the small acorn the great oak arises. But the acorn is more wonderful than the oak, because in it there lies the hidden power of growth, while around it, adapted to it, is the environment of soil and sunshine, moisture and air, apart from which growth would be impossible. The growth of the

world up to man is like the development of the seed, or, better still, of the invisible germ which carries in it such a rich and varied inheritance, and expands into the body of bird or beast or man. There is in that world-seed, vitalised by God—of which He is the life-principle, in which His creative Thought is immanent—that which contains "the promise and potency" of all that follows in Nature. Tyndall said "Matter" contained it; but most thinkers, even physicists, affirm at least a spiritual side to Matter, if not a spiritual origin. God is the Parent who, in ways inscrutable by us, sends forth from Himself the world-seed eternally. Out of this, in its divinely furnished environment, all proceeds. All is from an original Unity, one aspect of which, at least, is "Reason"; hence the inevitable working of all things as cause and consequence—a *reason* is operative in all that happens. There is a spiritual environment, which God is.

He has, in the working of *the Whole*—the Whole as it affects us—caused to arise in every man's nature an *Ideal of Fatherhood*, however untrue to it we may often be. Nor is it a mere Ideal: it carries in it an *Ought*. It stands above us; it is imposed on us; it is the will for us of the Power that has formed us. All the qualities that belong to a true human fatherhood and motherhood must be in their fulness in the Source of our being—if we believe in such a Source at all. And, since we did not come from nothing, and did not create ourselves, we must think of that Source as real, not less than, nor *like* its finite expressions, but in every way greater than ourselves, the Fountain of all fatherhood and motherhood. He "of whom every fatherhood in heaven and on earth is named."

Our Father, Jesus taught, is present everywhere and

in everything, although, of course, in varying degree and mode. " I am mixed in it all " was the word that came to an anxious seeker. We may not say that God *is* " the All," for there is much in " the All " that is not Divine. But there is a far deeper and wider Divine working than aught we can see or trace. There is, as Jesus taught and made manifest in His life and death, *a higher order* than the " natural," even that spiritual order in which we as spiritual beings are constantly living and acting—without thinking about it. Even in the most seemingly adverse events God is in some mode present, so that they all minister to moral and spiritual life, and good can always come out of them. God is far greater, larger, than we think. The Apostle speaks truly when he says : " All things work together for good to them that love God."

IV. LOVE AS *THE* SOURCE

To say that God is the Father of men is the same thing as to say that *Love* is the Source of our being, the Source of the world and the Supreme power in it. When we think of " God," we have in mind the highest and best that we know or can imagine—One in the thought of whom we can feel completely satisfied. We speak of " the search for God " to-day, but, consciously or unconsciously, man has been always seeking God and been unsatisfied with what he himself has found. The search has gone on steadily in certain lines, but God was at the same time seeking man, and just as man came to realise what was highest and best in life, he came to know more and more truly what God is. Is not Love—real Love—one with Reason and Righteousness, the highest and best

that we can think of? Does it not make itself felt in our hearts and to our reason, and in all experience, as the Supreme Law of our life, obedience to which would make all well in the moral world? Is it not that which God *is*? Have we not in this knowledge of *the supremacy of Love* the God whom we seek made known to us, ever near and within us? "GOD IS LOVE," a Christian Apostle wrote, "and he that dwelleth in Love dwelleth in God and God in him." The God whom we seek, or wish to believe in, is with us all and may be actively within us in the Love that we *know* to be supreme. And Love can only exist, be a motive in, and go forth from a self-conscious, personal Being—not a finite person such as a man is, with necessary limitations, but One who, while Infinite, has in Himself all the qualities of Personality. *God is that which we can worship.* Now, what is it that we can worship with no misgivings, with our whole heart and mind? Not Nature, nor man, nor a Creator merely, nor an Almighty Being: it is *Love.* God is the perfect, ever living, ever giving, ever present Love. From His Love the Creation proceeds. The suffering in the physical order is inevitable if there is to be such an order. This is not merely "the best of all possible worlds," it is the only kind of world possible for beings of flesh and blood. In the thought of God as Love we find that which we can worship and rest in.

It was above all in a personal life of Love, ever seeking to do good to others and stopping not at the complete sacrifice of Himself, that men saw God in Christ—a Personality that entirely transcended self, a life of such universal love as we feel sure must be the life of God, if we are to think of God at all. Men ask for the reason for the Creation, why there should

be a world of finite beings at all? We find the answer in the Love that God is. It is the perfect love that is His life that is the Source of His continued self-giving in the boundless, never-ceasing Creation—the *motive* of that eternal *kenosis* in which it is founded, wherein the Highest is for ever going down to the lowest, the One for ever going out into the many, to return to Himself again *in them* as His sons. Perfect Love cannot possibly keep itself to itself, but must be for ever going out from itself to become the seed of worlds that shall, in its self-realisation therein, produce *others* who can share in the perfect and eternal life and blessedness. For that reason it is that worthy self-sacrifice is the highest, divinest thing in man, the finding of his truest self; because it is the very life of *God*, the deepest principle and Divine seed of the creation:

"Love is the root of creation; only to love and be loved again,
He sends forth His Spirit."

Yet, going out from Himself thus in His love to become immanent in His worlds, ultimately incarnate, He does not lose Himself therein, but remains in His Divine transcendency the spiritual environment of every man's life. The action of unconscious matter, resulting in world-formation, and the appearance of Life finding its goal in man, shows clearly that Mind, Thought, Purpose, are *first* and *in it all*, that something from God is in it all; that in some way God Himself enters, gives Himself to, the Creation. He must have a *motive* for this action. Its very nature, as Divine self-giving for the sake of His Creation, proclaims the motive to be *Love*, the same Love that has "borne our sins" and "carried our sorrows," and "in all our

affliction been afflicted," the same infinite Love that declared itself in the Cross of Christ.[1]

The Incarnation of God in Christ

In seeking to show the reality of the Incarnation a fuller statement will be given of the manifestation of God in man. The incarnation or manifestation of God in Christ is a witness to the reality of the Divine Fatherhood, because, if man's essential nature were not the same as the Divine, God could not express Himself therein.

V. VERIFICATION IN EXPERIENCE

A further reason for faith in God as our eternal, unseen Father is to be found in the way in which this faith is *verified in the experience of those who exercise it.*

It is not, however, a mere cold belief in God as Father that is needed, but a *faith* that goes actively out to Him as such, the faith of the heart that carries the whole man into union with Him, puts our trust in Him, and devotes ourselves to Him. Such faith meets

[1] *Vide* on this subject *The Spirit and the Incarnation, Christ the Creative Ideal*, and *Christian Theism* by the present writer.

Professor Simpson, of the New College, Edinburgh, also says in his recent work, *Man and the Attainment of Immortality*: "In the sphere of religious thought nothing more profound or challenging has ever been uttered by human lips than the statement that 'God is Love.' It gives a complete philosophy of religion; for, if God is Love, then, since Love must needs express itself in action, and have that to which it can go out in mutual fellowship, it would follow that the age-long process—that Divine self-communication and impartation that constitute creation—begun in order to produce a plurality of human souls—all creation is a process *of kenosis*" (p. 25).

God and finds satisfaction for the nature we possess· finds an answer to the deepest craving of our hearts, learns to say with the Psalmist: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison with Thee." It opens up new fields to mind and heart, gives us life in a fulness we did not enjoy before. It can sustain in all adverse experiences, enable us to find good in all that comes to us, to believe that all things are ministering to that which is highest and best in us and for us. We are never ultimately disappointed. It is truly "the Faith that overcomes the world." It also inspires us with such a love for our heavenly Father and all that is His, and that quickens in us a supreme desire to prove ourselves His true children, devoted to His Cause and Kingdom, to all that is just and good, highest and best for all men as His children and our brethren. It makes us co-workers with Himself towards the completion of His creation. It enables us to say with Paul: "Our sufficiency is of God," and to obtain help from beyond ourselves in every time of need. As Dr. Percy Gardner remarks, "There is an enormous consensus of testimony" (see a fine statement in *The Practical Basis of Christian Belief*, pp. 70, 71).

Faith thus ministering to the highest and fullest life proves itself to belong to the Divine Order of the Universe—to the creative Thought as it culminates in man and a Kingdom and Family of God.

When we remember that He to Whom we are thus privileged to look up as our Father is the God of infinite Majesty and of spotless Holiness, our Lord as well as our Father, we feel our own littleness and unworthiness before Him, and are convicted of our many sins and failures in His sight. We gain thus a wholesome Humility, and are saved from that "pride by

which the angels fell" ; we realise our unlikeness to such a Father ; we feel, with shame and sorrow, our selfishness, waywardness, and sinfulness, our lack of real love, answering to His love in creation and in Christ. But His Mercy as revealed in Christ—that Mercy that " is mightiest in the Mightiest and becomes the thronéd Monarch better than his crown," emboldens us to trust Him in His fatherly forgiving love, and to commit ourselves to Him in spite of our conscious unworthiness. We realise too that we are " not flesh but spirit," sharing in a Divine Life.

And when we think of the infinite resources of power in God, and of the wisdom that is unsearchable, of all there is in God seeking to impart itself to man as His child, the object of the creation, and of all we are continually learning of possibilities we had never dreamed of in Nature and in man, the thought that Death ends all becomes impossible ; rather we say with St. Paul : " I am persuaded that neither death nor life nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Possibilities open up to us beyond our imagining, such as can only be known as they are experienced.

How in every case God fulfils His fatherly relationship to those who trust Him and are anxious to know and take His way, we cannot tell, but it is certain that He does so.

> " Say not my soul from whence
> Can God relieve thy care ;
> Remember that Omnipotence
> Has servants everywhere."

" Are they not all ministering spirits ? " They who put their trust in Him, and seek to know and do His

will in the spirit of Love and self-sacrifice, are never put to permanent shame nor left unrecompensed. Even should they meet with many temporal disappointments, and their way seem a *via dolorosa*, and "its end far out of sight," or even in this world a Cross, as it was with Him who was "made perfect by the things that He suffered," they shall share His confidence that it is all as it must be, and all working for good to themselves and others. In the words of "The King's Good Counsel," attributed to James I. of Scotland:

> "Love most thy God, that first thy love began,
> And for each inch He will thee 'quite[1] a span."

Any belief in God that falls short of faith in Him as our Father will not suffice either for our own highest life or for the advancement of His Kingdom. To believe that there is a God above all that seems at times an unintelligible welter—in human life especially—is a great matter. But all depends on *what kind of God He is*, and what is His relation to us. Mere Power, were it Omnipotence, or even absolute Justice, will not meet the case. Only such omnipotent *Love* as belongs to Divine Fatherhood as Jesus proclaimed it in His Gospel, and manifested it in His Life and sacrifice, can meet it. Fatherhood in God does not imply good-natured softness, as if it did not greatly matter what men were or did, since all would come right in the long run—authority and regard for our highest good dwells with Fatherhood. Our Father, while He wishes us to be happy, does not seek simply to please us, to make us "happy," however little we may deserve happiness, or however far from good it would be for us. That would not be Love nor true Father-

[1] Requite.

hood. Wrong-doing, wrong-living, and wrong-feeling always, sooner or later, meet with inevitable consequences which, although our Father may forgive us, cannot be wholly escaped by us ; but in our acceptance and suffering of these He helps us to bear them, and makes them serve our truest good, our highest and Eternal life.

In our individual life we may have experiences which will suggest doubts of the Fatherly regard of God. Even after we come to Him, put our trust in Him, desire and seek to obey and to live in love, these experiences may be ours. But in them God is continuing or perfecting His creation of us in His own image and likeness ; they are only part of such discipline as a true father may give his children " for our profit that we may be partakers in His Holiness." If we believe in God as our Father we " must not forget the exhortation which reasoneth with us as with sons, ' My son regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him. For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.' " " It is for discipline that ye have to endure, God is treating you as sons " (Moffatt).

And if we commit ourselves to Him as sons, trust Him, wait on Him, and seek to know and do the Right, we shall experience His Fatherly care and prove His ability to " do for us far above all that we can ask or think." What He seeks above all to do for us is to save us out of our narrow, self-formed, individual, earthly selves, to raise us above all petty, selfish, separating interests into the universal Love that He Himself is—the Love that is the life of the Kingdom whether in this world or in that which is to come.

Christianity holds that the Fatherhood of God was supremely manifested in Jesus Christ. This will form the subject of another chapter. But first let us view from another standpoint the source of Christ's mission as being in God.

V

THE KINGDOM AND THE CHRIST: THE SOURCE OF THE "KINGDOM": THE NEW DIVINE-HUMAN MAN AND SON OF GOD

CHAPTER V

THE KINGDOM AND THE CHRIST: THE SOURCE OF THE "KINGDOM": THE NEW DIVINE-HUMAN MAN AND SON OF GOD

SINCE the Gospel of the Kingdom comes to us from Jesus Christ in human form, it is desirable to show still further that its ultimate source is in God.

The Ideal of the Kingdom of God was not conceived and announced by Jesus for the first time, although it first came through Him in its full spirituality and without any limitations. What He proclaimed was the approaching fulfilment of a long-promised and ardently cherished Ideal. In Israel it belonged originally to that conception of a Theocracy which was sought to be instituted in that nation, wherein God Himself should reign immediately over His people, and through them, over all. When it became evident that without further preparation its realisation was impossible amongst them, the prophets, moved by the Spirit that inspired them, projected their vision into the Future, and beheld its realisation in days to come—so persuaded were they of the divineness of the Ideal. *It meant the ultimate triumph of their just and holy and good God, Jehovah*—the one true God—and of His people along with Him, and it really means virtually the same thing to-day, the ultimate triumph of God as revealed in Christ—our

Father. It is something that every one who believes in a righteous and good God must look forward to. Hence it was not in Israel only that this Ideal and expectation arose, as it was not in that nation alone that belief in a morally good God was reached. We find it, in particular, in Persia in Zoroastrianism, which Dr. Moore describes as " a prophetic reform or revolution of the old Iranian religion." " According to Zoroaster, the age-long war between good and evil should end in the triumph of the good God and the discomfiture of all that opposes Him. The good will prevail universally, and all evil be everlastingly destroyed. The world will be transformed into an abode of the blest ; hell itself, purified by fire, will be annexed to the habitable earth to enlarge its borders. The great Day was at hand, therefore let all decide on which side they are " (G. F. Moore, *Origin and Growth of Religion*, pp. 129–131). Such a faith is natural for all who believe in a just and good God. The source of the Kingdom Ideal is therefore to be found in what is deepest and " likest God within the soul." It means the vindication of the Creation in the ultimate and final triumph of Good.

Although the Ideal did not enter Israel from Persia, yet, as that people were for a considerable time under Persian rule (Cyrus, described by the prophet as God's " Servant," was a Zoroastrian), modifying and enlarging influences may have come to them from that source ; it is generally believed that from thence the idea of personal Immortality or " Eternal life " was derived.

With the prophets of Israel, this Ideal of the coming triumph of God filled their heart and illuminates their pages. It shone with the radiance of Hope, and upheld

the pious in the darkest days. Take, for example, that remarkable vision in the fourth chapter of Micah and the second chapter of Isaiah, when all nations " shall walk in the light of Jehovah," who shall " judge among many people and rebuke strong nations afar off ; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks : nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree ; and none shall make them afraid : for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it " (Mic. iv. 1–4 ; Isa. ii. 1–4 ; see also Isa. xi. 1–10, etc.). The vision is that of a Kingdom of God as realised in time and on this earth. It is one of many, all having Israel for their centre.

When prophecy proper had ceased, the Apocalyptists set forth the same Hope and pictured the Day of God's triumph and that of His people in graphic language. Daniel, the earliest and most sober of them, declared that the day would come when " the God of Heaven should set up a Kingdom that should never be destroyed " (Dan. ii. 44). In Dan. vii. 13, 14 that Kingdom was represented as given to one in human form—" one like a son of man " (*i.e.* a man)—" even dominion and glory and a Kingdom, that all people, nations, and language should serve him ; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, that which shall not pass away, and his Kingdom (that) which shall not be destroyed "—as all former Kingdoms had been. This Ruler is significantly represented as a *man*, in contrast with the animal forms by which previous Kingdoms had been pictured : it should be a truly *human* rule, the Kingdom of man because the Kingdom of God. It should be " the kingdom and dominion

and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven," given to " the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him " (ver. 27). This is, of course, still an earthly Kingdom, and when it is said that " the saints of the Most High shall take the Kingdom and possess the Kingdom for ever and ever " (ver. 18), the reference is no doubt, as it was in Jesus' understanding, to Israel in the first instance, but not necessarily to be confined to that nation. On the contrary, the Kingdom God is to set up is to be a universal as well as an everlasting Kingdom.

Later Apocalyptists repeated and enlarged in various ways this Ideal of a Kingdom of God (without in general using the term) and kept the expectation of its coming, in one form or another, alive among the people. But as time went on, some of these, as we have seen, came to realise the impossibility of the establishment of such a Kingdom on this earth, and cast their vision beyond this world altogether, or else to an entirely new or transfigured earth. From the questions asked of Jesus concerning " Eternal Life," " the saved," and " entrance into the Kingdom," and His answer to the Sadducees concerning life in the coming Age, this seems to have been a common view in the time of Christ. It was His own view of the Kingdom, and was, indeed, the only possible conception of an actual Kingdom of God to be inherited by those to whom He preached the good news, or those living on the earth in succeeding times before the final consummation. It was the perfect Kingdom of God in heaven come down to and established on a transfigured earth.

At the same time, the early chapters of St. Luke's

Gospel look for the establishment of the Kingdom in a political sense: an emancipated Israel dwelling in their own land and free to serve their God "without fear in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life," a revelation to the Gentiles of what their God could do for His people. Certain sayings of disciples such as, "We hoped that it was he who should redeem Israel," and the question, "Lord, dost Thou at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?" indicate the prevalence of this view.

With some of the forecasts of the coming Kingdom, though not with all, one specially anointed by God, the Messiah or Christ, was associated as its Inaugurator and Head. The Coming and Kingdom of the Messiah became thus a national Hope.

Born to a people cherishing ardently the hope of the Kingdom, and eagerly looking for its coming, praying, waiting for it, constantly talking of it, Jesus, with a mind set on the things of God, must have pondered the ancient prophecies and pictures, seeking light respecting the nature of the Kingdom and of its coming. He saw that a real Kingdom of *God* could not be an earthly Kingdom limited to or centred in Israel, but must be a spiritual and eternal Kingdom; that it could not, in its truth and finality, be set up on this earth but, while its spiritual qualities must be realised and manifested on this earth, and membership in it attained and evidenced in this life, the Kingdom in its Divine and Eternal truth could only be established in a transcendental sphere. He believed that the Kingdom of God was real in Heaven, and that it would come from God to a purified and transfigured earth, that God's purpose of deliverance and up-raising of His people would be fulfilled, although not in the way in which many were expecting it. He therefore offered

the Kingdom to Israel, but made it plain that it was not earthly or political, that it could only be found when they devoted themselves to God as Father and Lord, and were in their persons raised above that nature-self which belonged to the outer and perishing world. The Spirit that had moved in the prophets of old time, giving them to " see afar off " the glory of the coming great Day, dwelt in its fulness in Him. He felt that the real salvation of God, that which they needed, was not merely from outward evils but from themselves—from self and sin. He assured them that it was only such a deliverance that could make them the members of the longed-for Kingdom of God, and that it was only when the people as a whole were so made inwardly and *truly* " the people of God " that the Kingdom could come to them.

He had pondered deeply also what had been said of the Messiah, God's Anointed One, who should bring in the Kingdom.

With His feeling of filial relationship and devotion to God, of love for His cause and people, and intense sympathy with them in their suffering, He yearned for the fulfilment of those God-inspired visions. He had seen " the man " who was to bring in the Kingdom and be its Ruler under God described as God's *Son* (the appellation of the Kings of Israel) as reigning under God (see Ps. ii. 7, etc.), one specially endowed and called to the office—" the son of man whom Thou madest strong for Thyself " (Ps. lxxx. 17), or " the son of man " (the man) in Daniel's vision. From His early youth He had felt Himself to be God's child as truly as He was the child of human parents, more truly indeed, so that " the things of His Father " ranked above all that was earthly. His whole heart

went out to God and His Will. He found Himself to be endowed with certain extraordinary powers which He believed had been given Him with a view to use beyond what was personal, the bestowal of which on Him might even be an indication of the drawing nigh to men of the God who alone could bestow them. In the consciousness of the presence within Him of that Spirit of God which He regarded as the source of those supernormal powers—representing, it might even be, that Divine anointing (Christing) which was to distinguish "the Servant of God" and fit Him for His Mission, He deemed it possible that even *He* might be "the man" fitted and called by God to proclaim the near advent of the promised Kingdom. What deeper spiritual communications He received we know not, but we know that He regarded His Father as being also the Revealer of spiritual things even unto "babes." All the Gospels say that a special confirmation of His Messianic Sonship and Call came to Him at His baptism by John, who recognised in Him the promised Christ—"He who was to come." Some calculation of the prophetic "times" also, which the words "the time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand" in St. Mark (i. 14) suggest, may have had a place in creating the conviction that the Kingdom was near, and that He was chosen and called to the high mission of proclaiming its approach and bringing it in—to declare the drawing nigh of God in forgiving love and saving power. As He who was so called, to whom under God the Kingdom was committed, He knew Himself to be its Lord who, as the Representative of God on earth, could speak with an assurance and authority that no one else possessed, even announcing that forgiveness of sins on which the coming of God to His people was founded (Jer. xxxi. 34,

etc.). He did not come forth as a human Teacher merely, but as fulfilling in Himself the ideal of the Christ or anointed of God, and although rejected and doomed to the death of the Cross, He so regarded Himself to the last. The "works" that were done through Him were the proof of His claim.

But so different was His conception of that high office from that commonly entertained that He did not openly take to Himself that title till near the end. Instead of calling Himself "the Son of God" or the "Son of David," His chosen self-designation was "the Son of Man," or "the Man," the man whom God was to send, to whom the establishment of the Kingdom was committed. He should be the vicegerent and Representative of God on earth, and at the same time the Representative of His people Israel, and not of Israel only but of *man* as the child of God. He made it plain in His first discourse that not Israelites only were regarded and favoured by God.

For any one to take to Himself this office and position of the Son and Christ of God, with all that this implied, and all that belonged to it, suggests something *organically* deeper than the normal, a consciousness very much *above* the ordinary, and a sense of relationship to God as His Father far beyond what any other man has ever attained to. As related to all that preceded it, and to all that has followed, it may well be described as "supernatural" and Divine, without removing it out of the realm of the human, but rather as manifesting what the human can become in the creative working of God, and through His indwelling.

Apart from what was to Jesus a distinctly Divine

Call, entitling Him to rely on Divine sanction, guidance, and support, the assumption of the position of God's Messianic Son and Lord of men would have been a height of presumption such as the Jesus of the Gospels, sane and wise, " meek and lowly in heart," never could have manifested of His own choice. He was urged to it—*compelled*, we might say—like Moses and Jeremiah—by something higher than Himself, by " the Spirit of His Father " that was in Him, the same Spirit that drave Him into the wilderness to endure His preliminary testing as the Messianic Son, and form His final decision as to His course. It was in the consciousness of a Mission from God and of the presence and power of the Spirit of God within Him, that He weighed seriously His commitment, met and conquered in His Temptations, and shaped His course accordingly, always seeking to know and do *only His Father's will*, and waiting till His " hour " should come.

We thus see the whole movement within Him regarded by Jesus as *a Divine movement*. He was " sent " by God. His work was undertaken with direct reference to God, to be carried out, not in ways that might seem good to " flesh and blood," but solely in obedience to the indications of His Father's Will, however it might seem, and whatever it might cost Himself. All throughout the life of Jesus we witness the influence and rule of *a Higher than Himself*. If He speaks, it is not from Himself but from " Him who sent Me " ; those who receive Him receive, " not Me but Him who sent Me " ; if He acts, it is not in His own power but in that of " the Holy Spirit " ; His mighty works are done " by the finger of God " ; it is never that *His* will merely may be done ; from first to last it is " not My will but Thine be done." Having

received and accepted a Divine Call we see Him living in constant communion with the unseen Father who had called Him and in dependence on Him ; having hours of solitary prayer to His Father, seeking ever His guidance, drawing from Him His strength, calling others to the same devotion to God and the same trust in Him. " Have faith in God," He said in view of the works His disciples marvelled at. *He* was there, " the Son of man "—the man—before them, but deeper within Him was " the Spirit of God " or " the Holy Spirit," so that, while men might speak lightly of *the man* they saw, they must be careful not to blaspheme the God who by His Spirit was in Him and working through Him, " the Doer of the works." The presence of that Spirit in Him in beneficent power was, He said, the proof that " the Kingdom of God had come upon them." In all this it is not only Jesus we see and hear, but *God*, immanently by His Spirit in Him and transcendently with Him, communicating Himself to Him and manifested by Him. He stands forth as the special organ of that creative and educative Power, that Supreme Reality we think of as *God*. If God is Father, Jesus knows Himself to be the Son in human form—lives and dies as such.

Jesus thus comes before us with a real message *from God*, if any such message can ever come to us from God. He is more than a prophet : He fulfils in Himself the ideal of Him whom the prophets foresaw and of whom they spoke ; God comes not to Him merely as He came to the Prophets, God is organically in Him : God now comes to us in a *Son*. Jesus can claim Him as " My Father " as no one else can do, while all are ideally, and may become actually sons of God. An authority rests on Him, and an atmosphere

surrounds Him which impose a reverence beyond that given to the best and greatest of other men. He is more than " the Christ " even—as He had been conceived—" unique " is the word that arises most readily—*man* indeed, yet man such as had never been seen till then, and has never been matched in any man since. He was a " Jew " by birth—" of the seed of David according to the flesh." But He was much more than " a Jew," as His rejection and crucifixion showed. He had burst the bonds of nationality and race. He was *man*, a new and higher man, the creative Source and Head of a new spiritual ultra-racial Humanity. If we say that He is already idealised in the Gospels, that still implies that there was in Him something very exceptional that could be so idealised. No merely humanitarian conception can explain Him.

The sense of the presence of God in and with the Person of Christ so communicated itself to others, and the influences that proceeded from Him were such that they felt that in Jesus there was, as already said, more than even " the Christ " as He had been hitherto conceived. They saw in Him the best they had believed about God, and something still better—that which they felt in their hearts God must be and instinctively hoped for from Him. What emanated from Jesus they felt was not of man but of God present in Him ; and the time came when, in the intellectual and religious environment in which they lived, they could only express and conserve what they had found in Christ, by saying that He was God as well as man, that He was, as it latterly found expression, the eternal Son of God (God the Son) who had become incarnate for men's salvation. This has continued to be the belief of the great Body of the Christian Church, and

whatever may have to be said with respect to the forms in which it has been expressed, it sought to give utterance to something true and essential, namely, that God was verily present and specially manifested in Christ. It ultimately found formal expression in the doctrines of the Incarnation and Deity of Christ. Both of these doctrines, however, require careful reconsideration and restatement if they are to be in harmony with the historical Gospels, with the utterances, life, and real humanity of Christ, with what we otherwise know of God, with Christ's revelation of Him, and if they are to be vitally influential truths for the present time. The next chapter will seek to show the reality of the Incarnation of God in Christ, rightly taken, and the relation in which He stood and stands to God and to us. If God was truly, in any real sense, incarnate in Jesus, we have in the fact the strongest reason for believing His Gospel and for submitting ourselves to His Lordship and Leadership. But meanwhile let me, in concluding the present chapter, remark that the fact that Jesus accepted, at least in the forms of His belief and teaching, matter that belonged to Apocalyptic, and proclaimed the coming of the Kingdom in a way that was not realised, does not in any degree detract from His relation to God. If He was true *man* at all, He must have entertained many of the views of His time and place, and the current Hope of the coming Kingdom, with the form of its coming, need not be excepted. But He put His own meaning into it. He rejected the purely political, limited, and earthly conception so widely held, and while He regarded the Kingdom as something objective and substantial to be set up by God, its scene was not on this earth but on a radically transfigured earth or in a transcendental Realm. At the same time, He so

emphasised the spiritual aspects of the Kingdom as to make it (like the Divine Fatherhood) something quite new, actually present and developing in its essential character. His conception of "the Christ" was also a transformed one. While the Lord of men, *royalty*, was no longer the predominate note, but *suffering*, an idea far from the thoughts of His people—whether derived from Isaiah or from Daniel. He was early convinced that He must be rejected and put to death "*as it was written.*" If He thought of Himself as "the man" to whom God committed the Kingdom, who was to come forth from God in power—His "Coming again—He must have known that before He could so come from God He must first go to God by death, and this was in keeping with what is said of the Servant of God in Isa. liii. with Ps. xxii. and Zech. xiii. 7 (see Mark xiv. 27; Matt. xxvi. 31).

The Divine in Christ (or in any truly human being) is not to be sought in His intellectual beliefs, but in the deeper region of the *spirit*, where the Divine Spirit possessed the human, and through it sought expression. That expression could only be given through the medium of a human Mind, just as it could only be made through that of a human body. Apart from the body of Christ, the Divine manifestation could not be made; no more could it be made except through the *human* mental organ—both body and mind acting according to their natural constitution and "laws." God does not teach in human words, but by the movement of His Spirit in our spirits. It is not in the merely intellectual, any more than in the bodily, that we can see the God who was deepest of all in Christ as inspiring and possessing *Spirit*. It was because of that deeper indwelling of the Spirit, that is, of God, that, in spite

of those inherited forms of thought, so full expression was given to what is spiritual. The reality of a spiritual and eternal Kingdom prepared by God for His human children was the Divinely inspired and essential faith which the human mind of Jesus held and announced to His people in the commonly accepted forms of "the coming of the Kingdom of God." But all the while He was, under Divine inspiration, giving such a spiritual significance to "the Kingdom," and so declaring the nearness of God and His fatherly love for men *in the present*, that He was laying the foundations of that spiritual Kingdom that began to come in fuller power into the hearts of men when He had, still in obedience to the same Divine movement, by His Cross fulfilled His earthly mission and entered on a spiritual and universal Lordship. Then, with the belief in Him as the exalted Christ and Lord, began that which is known as "the Kingdom of Christ" and special attachment to His Person. And, while this spiritual Kingdom is to be constantly extended on earth—the Kingdom of God that Jesus preached—is still a Kingdom of the Future, belonging to the Divine and Eternal.

NOTE

It should be added that there was nothing strange in the use by Jesus of Apocalyptic terms. As Dr. Charles and others have shown, much of the religious development in Israel came in the line of Apocalyptic "as the expression of convictions reached through their experience of life in the world by men with a strong faith in God." Many of our Christian conceptions and current coin of our religious speech, such as Immortality, Resurrection, Heaven as a place of Bliss, Eternal Life (first occurring in Daniel), a final Judgement, a difference in the eternal destinies of the righteous and the wicked, the Kingdom of God as a world-wide dominion

(Dr. Charles adds, the Duty of Forgiveness), have come to us through these writings (see, *e.g.*, *Between the Old and New Testaments*, by Dr. Charles in The Home University Library, and his larger volumes : *Preparing the Way*, by Mr. Streatfield ; *The World to Come*, by Dr. Leckie (with Appendices) ; *Jesus and Jewish Teaching*, by Dr. Thomas Walker, and other writings. Dr. Charles has, I think, somewhere said that the Apocalyptic period was the richest of any in spiritual teaching.

VI

HOW GOD WAS INCARNATE IN CHRIST

CHAPTER VI

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IF God Himself was really incarnate in Jesus Christ, while Jesus was none the less truly *man*—man as conceived by God as His Son (therefore Divine as well as human)—this should give us the strongest confidence in His teaching; it should impart the highest significance to His acts, and create the deepest reverence for His life and work and person. It would account for the unique influence He has exerted and still exerts in the world.

As Dr. Percy Gardner remarks in his interesting statement of "The Practical Basis of Christian Belief," it is the fact of the incarnation of God in Christ that distinguishes Christianity from "the really Unitarian Religions, Judaism and Islam, and Christianity." The difference "lies in this, that the latter, in addition to the doctrine of Divine unity, preaches also the doctrine of the Incarnation" (p. 195). It is really the fundamental Christian fact; for if we do not see *God* in Christ we have nothing exceptional for faith to grasp and be loyal to in practice. Of course, there are great varieties of "Unitarian religion"; we are all, as Dr. Gardner remarks, in a sense Unitarians; we are all, with Jesus Himself, believers in One God only, and it would scarcely be correct to say that no Unitarians, as distinguished from professed Trinitarians, believe in an exceptional or special incarnation of God in Christ.

But since the belief is so important, it is surely a

prime duty to endeavour to make it as plain and as readily credible as possible. Dr. Gardner (p. 189), with the late Dr. Hastings Rashdall, and many other recent thinkers, regards the Incarnation as a *process*, a conception advocated by the present writer in 1899 in *The Spirit and the Incarnation*, to which he has held fast with increasing satisfaction up till now, which view is being widely adopted by independent thinkers.[1]

Many to-day feel unable to believe in the Incarnation of God in Christ as it has been stated in the Creeds and held by the Church. But these Creeds were formulated more than a thousand years ago by Christian men seeking to preserve the one great essential truth they saw in Christ, and they could only do so in the forms of thought of their time, and in keeping with the beliefs they held. It by no means follows that the same truth cannot be conserved and the full reality of God in Christ maintained in other more modern ways.

Jesus Himself did not claim to be an incarnation of God, as did certain later pretenders. This would have placed Him on a distinctly lower level. But the position was given Him in the Creeds of the Church;

[1] "The Modernist," says the Rev. H. D. A. Major, "regards the Incarnation not as a single act, but as a process; it is an aspect, the latest, of the creative process. This process, he believes, culminated in Jesus Christ. It did not, however, stop there. It attained in Him its first great triumph, but this was, if I may use the phrase, *un point d'appui*" (*Hibbert Journal*, July 1924). Of course there are others besides Modernists who hold the view. Dr. Garvie, *e.g.* referring to the statement that the Incarnation was "the result, not of a physical process merely, but of an ethical development through the Spirit," says he "entirely supports this contention" (*The Christian Certainty and Modern Perplexity*, p. 546 ff.; see also *Essays on Christian Thinking*, by Dr. A. T. Cadoux, chap. xviii.).

and yet in them He was not affirmed to be the incarnation of the Absolute God, but of the Son of God—God the Son—really a hypothetical Being. But this was their way of saying that they saw *God* in Christ. It was this vision of God in Him that gave supreme and saving value to all that He said and did. And it is still *God* we need to see in Christ, not only man, however great and good, not merely Jesus, but God in Him.

In the knowledge of the time it was believed that this truth could only be conserved by maintaining that Jesus Himself was God, not God the Father, in whom they also believed, but the eternal Son of God, of one substance with the Father, who had come into this world to be its Saviour. But the essential truth was that God was *in* Christ, not that the man Jesus Christ, of whose real humanity we are increasingly assured, however high it was above humanity as previously seen and known, was Himself God. It was that God was incarnated, living and manifested in Him, revealed in Him, as far as an infinite Being can find expression in a finite being—especially in His moral and spiritual character and thought of and for man. It is *God Himself* that we need to see in Christ, not (if we may so speak) the Deity of Christ, but that of God *in Him*.

While to some of the early Christians, especially to the non-Jewish portion, who may have assimilated the Christian salvation to that through the Saviour-gods of the Mysteries, Jesus was the only God (see *The God of the Early Christians* by Dr. McGiffert), by Paul and the great Body of Christians, while Jesus was Lord and Divine, it was the "God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ," who was the supreme and only *God*, who manifested Himself in Jesus His Son. "To us," said Paul, "there is but *one God*, the Father."

Various views, however, arose that seemed inconsistent either with the place given to Christ, or to that belonging to the Father, which had to be met.

But it was when the Eternal Sonship (Deity) of Christ was denied by the teaching of Arius, who maintained that, however high a place might be given to Jesus in relation to God, He was not God of the same substance as the Father, but a created Son of God—of a similar substance only—which deprived the Church of the reality of *very God* in Christ—that, in opposition to the Arian doctrine, the Nicene Creed was formulated. That Creed—which remains the standard orthodox Creed—affirms "the Lord Jesus Christ" to be "the Son of God, begotten of the Father, only begotten, that is to say, of the substance of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father (*homousion*, of the same substance, not *homoiousion*, of like substance, as the Arians said), through whom all things were made, both things in Heaven and things on earth, who for us men and our salvation came down and was made flesh, was made man, suffered and rose again on the third day, ascended into the heavens, and cometh to judge the quick and the dead." After affirming belief in the Holy Spirit, the Creed concludes by anathematising those who believe otherwise concerning Christ—that "there was time when He was not," as Arius had said, etc.

This Creed was very valuable for the time. Although, as has often been remarked, the difference between the accepted faith and Arianism consisted in a single Greek letter, and although instead of settling matters it was the beginning of fresh and fierce controversy, yet, as Carlyle said in his later years, it probably saved Christianity. But it does not follow

that it will be acceptable to all in this twentieth century with our better knowledge of God's mode of working, or, rather, let us say, with our closer attention to our Lord's own teaching concerning God and Himself, with His actual life and death as man, dependent on and in all things obedient to God above Him. It may also contain much that the mind of to-day cannot accept. The very word "substance," indeed, suggests the material rather than the spiritual; the place given to Christ in the Godhead may seem consistent only with a Tritheistic conception of the Trinity (which is, indeed, largely the popular conception); the idea of a Divine Being "coming down and being made man"—becoming, as is implied, a human germ in the Virgin's womb—or in some other supernatural way being "made man," is, we may surely venture to say, impossible on the part of a Being with *a definite character*, which, as such, cannot be transferred, but can only be gradually imparted by God and received by man in the process of human development. Most serious of all, it represents a tendency to remove Christ from the relation in which He stood to our humanity and to transfer to Him that which He invariably ascribed to God. It may seem to contradict Christ's central teaching of the Fatherhood of God and sonship of man and to be inconsistent with the real humanity of Jesus. A Being who, before appearing in human form, had a conscious separate existence with or in God, or of a Divine existence prior to the human, which surely could never be entirely lost, is not on the same ground as men in general. To be really *human*, a person must be born, live and die, be tempted and tried as other men, although He may manifest *a new and higher type* of humanity—a Divine humanity. In the end He may be so com-

pletely one with God as to be inseparable from Him. On the other hand, if He could in some sense leave what was characteristic of Deity behind Him, how, then, could He be *God* with men ?

That the Church was wrong in laying the stress on the Person of Christ instead of on the revelation of the Father in Him, is manifest from the bitter, un-Christ-like controversies that raged for centuries on these questions, the distraction they caused from practical Christianity, and the way in which all who could not accept certain intellectual beliefs were (and still are) excluded from recognised Christianity, which was yet held to be a religion for the whole of mankind and the Faith which alone can save the world. It has also created for Christian believers a Dualism of Christ *and* God which distracts the mind even in prayer, and often destroys the inward peace of the soul. As we shall see, Christ, as a spiritual Personality, is one with God.

As has been said, that which was sought in the Nicene Creed was the conservation of the fact that it was *God*, and none less than God, who was manifest or incarnate in Christ. This can be done in a far simpler way,—one that need create no intellectual difficulty,—a way in keeping with all that we read of Christ in the Gospels, with belief in that onward Divine movement to which the Old Testament bears witness and with our increased knowledge of God's method of working in the world and in man, a way that loses nothing in Christ, a much surer way than that metaphysical and unverifiable one that was adopted. As a matter of fact, it was because Christians had, quite apart from all theories, seen *God* in Christ, that the Creeds were formed. Believers in God to-day, reading the Gospels and contemplating the appearance

of Christ therein, can intuitively see in Him man, indeed, but at the same time a higher than man, even God manifested, present and acting in Him, and their vision can be fully vindicated in the light of our modern knowledge. The modern thought of God is that He is increasingly manifested in His works, chiefly in man true to the highest and best that moves in him. Thus, while we see in Jesus Christ *the man*, there is at the same time the God who was the formative power and the moving Spirit, the sole principle and power of His supernormal life, to whom *He ascribed everything*.

To be man at all, He must be " the child of the flesh " (" of the seed of David according to the flesh "), but at the same time He was " the child of the Spirit " (" the Son of God according to the Holy Spirit "). Not as being supernaturally created in the womb of the Virgin, which would not have given the incarnation of a pre-existent Being but a wholly new creation (" therefore the Holy Thing that shall be born of Thee shall be called the Son of God "), but as *the culmination of all God's working, not only in Nature but by His Spirit in Humanity*—specially in one particular line. Had He owed His human, earthly being to a miracle, how could He, with reason, have called others to share in the life He manifested ? We have thus in Christ that which God meant man to be and was constantly moving towards in History—not man after the flesh merely, but man as His Son, man wholly after the Spirit, that is, wholly after *God*—Divine as well as human. That which God had all along in view, which had been in some measure reached in others, was fully realised in Jesus, first, in a human organism in which the spiritual principle was dominant, as it had been more and more tending to become, and then

in a human life in which the Spirit was throughout the ruling principle—in a human consciousness and life of complete Sonship to God. This, I say, is both a simpler and a surer way of realising the essential truth; for we thus see God—the only God we have any knowledge of—supremely manifested in Christ as the result of and in continuance of His working in nature and in man. We do not need to try to imagine a Divine Being in some way denuding Himself of what belonged to His Deity—in which case, how would He be God?—and coming down to earth in a way which we cannot even imagine. In such a case we should only have one who had been *once* God but had left His Divine nature for the human.

It was the "Logos," the Reason (and Word) or Son of God that the framers of the Creed conceived as pre-existing and becoming incarnate. We can scarcely to-day think of the Reason and Word of God as existing as a separate or separable Person with or in God. But if we take the Logos or Son to represent that in God which was the Ideal of the Creation and became the Principle of the world's life, we have something we can understand. If we see this finding ever more and more complete expression in the world, above all, in man, as he becomes increasingly conscious of the nature of his life-principle in its moral and spiritual qualities, and increasingly conformed to it, we can understand how God can appear as man. It means that more and more of that which God *is* in relation to man actually possesses him—becomes in some measure incarnate in him—till complete expression is gained in Jesus Christ. We thus see God as the result of this process becoming incarnate, and we reach the same result as was sought to be expressed in the Creeds. We see God coming out from Himself and

becoming man, able to find self-expression in man (or as man), not by a self-denudation in a moment of Time, but in the course of an Eternal creative process operating in the physical, moral, and spiritual spheres, including that which the Bible represents as the action of the Holy Spirit. In the course of this process or "evolution," that which is new is always appearing, although always resting on that which had been previously wrought. In an evolution such progress may be for long almost imperceptible, then it may suddenly blossom out in the appearance of a Plato, a Shakespeare, or other genius. So in Jesus, the result of the spiritual working of God in the past appeared as something *new*, surpassing all that had gone before, but not unprepared. The person thus appearing is *man*, but He is man as conceived by God as His Son, gradually coming into manifestation, and in that man the living, all-creating God is expressing His life in human terms. We have in Him not only man "in union with God," but man as formed by and, from the first, *possessed* by God—one with God.

It is thus a revelation in human form of that which is deepest in the Creation, which has been progressively finding expression therein, always seeking to find complete expression in man. It is the manifestation of the creative thought of man as the Son of God, and, if we take account of the whole of the Divine work in Christ, culminating in His Cross and in the Spirit that proceeds through Christ, we see God finding the realisation of His creative purpose in Christ in such a way as can lead to its realisation in others.[1]

[1] When it is asked, "Was Jesus only man?" it would seem that if we say He was *more* than man, we deny that He was *man*—although we can say truly that He was more than ordinary man or more than man as he had hitherto appeared. To be "more than

I might stop here, but the subject is so important that I shall, at the risk of some repetition, endeavour to make it as explicit as possible, without pretending or desiring to expiscate "the Mystery of Christ," for we cannot even penetrate the mystery of man in ourselves.

We may, indeed, see in a very plain and simple way the reality of the incarnation of God in Christ if we think of God as *the eternal creative Love.* When we witness the love that God is filling a human soul and completely dominating a human life, we certainly see God in His essential character incarnate in that Life. But the question, *How such a manifestation was possible in man?* arises, and has to be faced.

The Incarnation of God in Christ was the culmination of a long process of self-realisation on the part of God as He had entered the creation, which was, at the same time, one of the self-impartation of Himself to man—beginning with the creation of the world. If we keep to the Christian conception of God as the Father of men or the creative Love, which, just because it is perfect Love, cannot be content within itself but must spread itself abroad, impart itself to others, find others to share in it—a necessity which exists in God in perfect freedom—making them sharers in the Divine life and blessedness, we shall find in this (as already said) the motive of the Creation which was

man" is really to be something *other* than man, just as to be more than an oak is to be something different. But if we see in Christ the revelation of *man* as God conceived him, while we witness that which differentiates Him from man coming short of that, we see in Him *man in his truth*, a higher type of manhood, a new Head of Humanity. We see in Him not only man but God as He can express His life in human form. The answer to the question, therefore, is, that man in the thought of God is not *only* man as the crown of the natural world, but the "partaker of a Divine nature," a son and heir of God.

gradually realising itself therein. The Ideal in the Mind of God (some philosophers would say, the creative "imagination") was that of *sonship to Himself*. It was to a Son, who should be "the first-born of many brethren," that the Divine love eternally went forth. This gives us "the Son in God," not as an already realised individual person, certainly not the human Jesus, but as that *Divine Ideal* of the creation which in the eternal Mind is also real. Therefore St. Paul speaks of Christ as "the Image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation, for *in* Him were all things created (in Him as the Ideal)—all things have been created through Him and unto Him, He is before all things, and in Him all things consist," that is, hold together as their creative Ideal and Goal. It is in this sense that we can affirm the pre-existence of Christ in God—what some apparently mean by "the Eternal Christ"—a confusing phrase.

If we are to maintain the Divine transcendence as well as Immanence, we must, for actual *creation*, think of God as, in His Love and desire to spread His Life abroad—giving others to share in it—going out from Himself in a Divine *kenosis*, becoming, as it were, the seed or principle of the world—really of innumerable worlds (for this creation has been, and is eternally proceeding)—to find Himself again in the realisation of His Ideal in His human sons and daughters to whom His life has been imparted. Every organism that we know of is formed under the influence of its ideal life-principle—all unconsciously to itself, of course—and this is supremely true of the great world-organism. There was no "blind Will" nor an "Unconscious Reason" going forth, nor was this *kenosis* or self-giving (self-giving rather than self-limitation) a "fall" in the Divine nature: on the contrary, it was its

supreme expression, its very *life*, that which, as already remarked, makes self-sacrifice for a worthy object the most God-like thing in man. "Turning to Christianity," said Dr. Ward in concluding his well-known Gifford Lectures, "we find it has one great secret—dying to live, and one great mystery—the incarnation. The love of God in creating the world implies both. The world is God's self-limitation, self-renunciation may we not venture to say? And so God is Love" (*The Realm of Ends*, p. 453).[1]

Science shows us how the process of the evolution of the Divine Idea proceeded. But when man was reached there were, in an evolution which had become predominantly psychical, not only intellectual, but moral and spiritual influences operating on him from his environment. This was spiritual as well as natural. There were influences proceeding from all Divine manifestations, from his experiences, and from the Ideal within him—all those visitations of God in His Holy Spirit which, whether directly or indirectly, came to men. It was only as his nature became *spiritualised*, or as the latent spiritual element deepest in it was brought into action, that the Divine Ideal of Sonship to God (which always implied also human brotherhood), could be realised in man. These influences were operative everywhere, and we witness a remarkable response to them on the part of certain outstanding members of various races and nationalities, always, however, under inevitable limitations. But by humanity as a whole, response to these higher

[1] This Eternal *Kenosis* is not to be confounded with that which St. Paul ascribes to "Christ Jesus" as "existing in the form of God," on which that which is known as the "Kenotic" doctrine of the Incarnation is based.

moral and spiritual influences was but slowly given. The " natural " principle of the lower animal or semi-animal life held sway in most men—just as it still continues so largely and widely to do, and the life thus gained seemed sufficient for most, as it still does.

In the Bible we have the record of the development of the moral and religious life in one " selected " line, just as the development of *human* life, as distinguished from the animal, had proceeded along one special line. It is the record of what we can only describe in human language as a special effort on the part of God to raise the men of one particular race with a genius for religion into the higher spiritual life. The response here also was slow, and had to be evoked at times by painful experiences of the lower life, which had to be long continued. But there were always some men, especially those whom we know as " prophets," who were open to the Divine, and could even speak to their fellows in the name of God, saying, " Thus saith the Lord," and gradually there were others, " saints," often the humble " poor," to whom God became not only more and more truly known, but was able more and more fully to enter and find expression in the life. These became increasingly possessed by His Spirit as the dominant influence, increasingly their own spirit. In the same way as the intellectual and moral gains of man were conserved and handed on by those laws of inheritance and " tradition " which conserve and carry still higher such advances, making always further advances possible, so was it with the spiritual advances, till at length an organism was formed in which the principle of the spiritual life—which was really the deepest principle of all life—(God)—was dominant over the lower principle of " the flesh," necessarily

first in the order of development,[1] or, as Biology would say, the Godward *tendencies* in the nature were supreme.

We have thus in Christ man *born wholly "after the Spirit,"* which means wholly after God, man with the capacity for God—and a dominant tendency to God, and the life of God in man, capable of fully realising in His life the eternal Divine Ideal (the life of God in man), man as the Son of God—man as Divine as well as human. Throughout His entire life-history Jesus was wholly true to this spiritual life-principle of supreme devotion to God, sinless and wholly righteous, even to the complete sacrifice of the nature-self in His service; living in such filial communion with God and obedience to His will, and with such response to the influences that visited Him from the transcendent Father, cherishing and manifesting the love that God is, even the infinite love that the Cross declared, so that in Him the Ideal of Sonship to God in an individual man was fully realised, and God was able to express His ethical character in *a Son*, who, as far as man could do so, shared and expressed the Divine nature.

Just as man was gradually raised out of the animal creation, so in Christ a higher type of manhood, which had only been in some measure approached before Him, entered the world and became the revelation of the higher life of God in man to others, and the power that can raise them into it, so that they may become the members of the Kingdom and Family of God here on earth, and fitted for the eternal Kingdom.

The Incarnation of God in Christ is thus not the

[1] Professor Simpson remarks that recent advances in biological thought, in their elucidation of the closely supporting and directive relation of the environment, are in that measure tending to establish the supremacy of the Neo-Lamarckian as opposed to the Neo-Weismannian account of Evolution. . . . Heredity, in a sense, is

outcome of the Divine immanence in Nature and in man merely, but of the Divine working in the Holy Spirit of which the Bible is the record, the result being God's spiritual and Divine *Son* in human flesh. It was not the Incarnation of "the Spirit," but of God in and through the Spirit. Nor was it merely "the Logos" as the principle of the world's life that was revealed in Christ, but the God who became that principle, and was also a transcendent presence ever near us, like the unseen "Ether," but spiritual. And, may we not say that, just as the change of the ether waves into sound waves enables our senses to realise its presence, so in Christ the Divine was so changed into human terms as to become a revelation of the unseen God who is always with us.[1]

It is by seeing the Incarnation to have been the result, not of the descent of a self-depotentiated Son, existing personally with God and becoming a human child, but as the culmination of all the previous and continuous working of God in Nature and in man, including that of His Holy Spirit, that we see how rational it is to believe in the incarnation of God in Christ. It is when we see Jesus coming straight from the heart of Nature, and from Him who had been all along working therein, and in man to the very end of His self-manifestation and self-impartation, that we have the firmest ground for the assurance that it is

really "potted" environment, and with the environment the last word rests" (*op. cit.* pp. 20, 21). According to Bible teaching, the Holy Spirit of God is man's spiritual environment.

[1] "God became man describes one of those great historic 'moments' in the evolutionary movement after which, as at the birthday of life and the dawning of self-consciousness, everything thereafter moved, as it were, on a higher plane. Yet, as a matter of fact, throughout the untold ages of organic history God *was becoming* man" (Professor Simpson, *op. cit.* p. 25).

really *God* who manifests Himself in Christ—reaching in His Person His highest manifestation in this world, and realising His creative ideal in an individual human life, meant, through that life, to be realised in all His children.

The Being whom we need to see incarnated (let it be repeated) is *the all-creating God and Father*, who is so far manifested in all His works and in all men as they are true to that which is highest and best—to the Love that God is. And we need to see this realised, not as the result of the supernatural descent of a Being whose existence as an individual Divine Person with God cannot be proved and cannot be reconciled with the Divine Unity, but of a divinely instituted and sustained evolutionary process, spiritual as well as natural. It is not a diminution but a *fulfilling* of God in His Creation. This, then, is what we behold in Christ. It is man wholly one with and possessed by God, human and Divine, the realisation in Christ of that which was the Divine creative purpose, which became also a redemptive one, involving the sacrifice of the Cross. We see man, I repeat, not merely "in union with God," but formed and possessed by God; we see God expressing Himself in and through a wholly responsive human life.

We have become familiar with the idea of a progressive revelation, why should we hesitate to believe also in a progressive incarnation? Revelation is meant to lead to a truer knowledge of God, and this to a fuller conformity to His character, otherwise it is of no value. The progressive revelation and the progressive incarnation ought thus to proceed *pari passu*, and no doubt they did so, although *we* may be unable to trace the steps of the progress in detail.

While *the man* Jesus Christ certainly did not pre-

exist *as such*, yet in the Eternal Mind, Thought, and Purpose of God, as the Divine Ideal of man and of the Creation, as the perfect Son in God's mind and heart—He *did* eternally pre-exist. In this sense He was "the Logos" of the Creation—its *Reason*, "that was with God and was Divine" (as Wisdom is personified as being with God in the creation), the self-giving, self-revealing side of God which became also the speaking side, the all-creative "*Word*" through which "all things came to be," and, in the fulness of the time, as the result of the continuous Divine movement, became expressed in human flesh ("the Logos, the Word, became flesh and dwelt among us"); so that men "beheld His glory as that of the only-begotten (or dearly loved) Son from the Father" (or from a Father); or as St. Paul put it: "God shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." The Logos, this Divine Creative Thought and Word of God, was "*in* the world" and did not need to come into it as if from without; it was God immanent in the world, only needing to find full expression. If we think, not of Christ as incarnating God, but of God as incarnating Himself in Christ as the outcome of the creative process, we will see how truly we have in the Person of Christ both the Divine and the human.

We may also thus find the ground of such a Trinitarian conception of the Divine existence as seems to be necessary for the concept of God as eternally self-conscious. But consciousness in God cannot be the same as human consciousness. We may think rather of a super-consciousness—some gleams of which appear even in man.

If we believe that God was in Christ, not merely through His response to the transcendent Father, but

organically as the Life that rose in Him, which He, as conscious person, freely made His own life; if we think of Him as He in whom the Eternal creative Power found full ethical expression in human form, we have, on that side of His Personality which was deepest and dominant, the pre-existent and Divine, Deity, indeed.

His complete *oneness* with God, so that we cannot separate the Divine and the human, leads to the same conclusion, which is supported by the place He holds and the influence He exerts in the world. Not that this entered into Christ's normal consciousness, but that we are able to see it in the light of our knowledge of the Divine creative and redemptive action. In Christ we have God as He has expressed His Divine Life in man, and brought into operation a Power that is competent to raise men into the life of sonship to Himself, without having to wait on the slow action of Evolution.[1]

What more than this do we need for an evangelical Christianity? What more *can we get* that can be assuredly and vitally believed? We can thus see that it was really *God*, the Creator of the world and the Father of men, who came to us in Christ, while still the all-environing Spirit—He "in whom we live and move and have our being."

[1] Dr. Gore in his recent suggestive book, *Belief in Christ*, seems to regard the fact of "the finality of Christ"—that there cannot be another Christ—as one of the strongest reasons for maintaining the Faith as it was expressed in the Nicene Creed. But, according to Bible theology, Jesus appeared as fulfilling a special function—that of "the Christ" in whom God purposed to come to the salvation of His people: He was *the* Christ, and in this sense there cannot be another. In a wider view, His finality is seen in the fact that there cannot be a higher manifestation of God given than was given in Christ, or a greater work done for man than was done in Him. God cannot appear morally greater nor do more for man than He did in Christ.

The incarnation of God in Christ as a gradual process is in harmony with all that we witness in Evolution.[1]

The Divine and the human were one in Christ, the Divine as imparting, the human as receiving, and as giving forth again. Hence we have " the Holy Spirit " as proceeding from both the Father and the Son, and Christianity as the outcome of the entire Divine manifestation.

Jesus now lives in His realised oneness with God. This is the meaning of the statement that He ascended to Heaven and is at the right hand of the Father. He is still man, still the *Son* of God, but all that separated man from God has been left behind. He is not " a man-made God " in any adoptionist sense or in any external manner, or as if there were a difference in the essential inner nature of God and man. In man's Ideal as a son of God there is the capacity for sharing in the Divine nature.

This which was true for man as man was realised in Christ. If God be the Creator of the world, and the Father of men, it is a Divine Spirit that is deepest of all in the Creation. And if that Spirit can so rise in a human organism as to be the very spirit of a human life ; if the man lived in complete oneness of spirit therewith ; if from the first the Divine was the initiative, formative, and controlling principle, gradually permeating and possessing the entire personality, then

[1] In a recently published volume, Dr. H. R. Mackintosh writes: " The future is not strictly given in and with the present, but is still unwritten—all things are in the hands of a God who creates by bringing perpetually to birth what is not simply unforeseen, but unforeseeable. . . . It will then remain to be asked, whether at a definite point in the past, the new fact vouchsafed to men may not have been a Personality in whom were present to an infinite degree the redeeming life and love of God " (*Some Aspects of Christian Belief*, p. 249).

we have *God becoming man* and *man unfolding and expressing the life of God* (in human form, of course). In the complete giving up of Himself on the Cross the human personality or manhood became so merged in the Divine that, while not lost in God, it became a wholly Divine manhood, in which the Spirit of God could go forth creatively (as " the Spirit of Christ ") raising men into the higher human life manifested in Christ—into Divine sonship each after his measure. Christ becomes thus " the first-born among many brethren " and the Lord and Saviour of men—the Lord of the Spiritual Kingdom and Leader of men. Not as taking the place of God our Father, but as by His Gospel bringing us to God, and by His Spirit in our hearts enabling us to trust, love, and obey our Heavenly Father; and live and act so as to advance His spiritual Kingdom and become fitted for the inheritance of His perfected Kingdom.

If God was so incarnate in Christ that the life of God found through Him such expression in human form as revealed the Divine character, it implies that the Spirit of Life that God is so rose in Christ as to possess Him, the human spirit being wholly responsive to, and at one with, the Divine. The man was there, but deeper and freely dominant was *God*.

This was a relationship that death could not dissolve. The union was one of Spirit. Hence we are able to believe in that complete triumph over death which is ascribed to Christ. Hence also in that " Holy Spirit," of the presence of which Christians became conscious, which they identified with the presence of Christ. They felt that Christ was with them. He was so in virtue of His indissoluble union with God. The Holy Spirit that " came " to them was at once the Spirit in which God is always with men and the Spirit that

proceeded through Christ, embracing the Divine manifestation in Him.

Believing in Christ as their living and exalted Lord, the attention of Christians was naturally centred on Christ, and it has in general so continued. Since He remains in His earthly life the supreme manifestation of God to men, it may be truly said that to come to Christ is to come to God, to open the heart to Christ is to open it to God, to respond to Christ's Call is to yield ourselves to God. Since His Spirit is one with the Spirit of God, looking to Him we can find the help of God in our life. Since He continues to be the Representative of man, self-identification with Him is to find the true life of man made ours, to be conformed to His likeness is to gain the human ideal, to have Christ living in us is to have God in Christ living in us. Yet there is a limitation and a shortcoming if we do not come into direct relation to the God and Father to whom Christ sought to bring men.

The New Testament shows that Christian thought went out sometimes to " Christ," sometimes to " the Holy Spirit," sometimes to " God." But, were there three separate Agents operating ? It may be truly said that in each case it is really to God that such thought goes out : the Source of all their experience was always recognised to be " God." Paul's earnest prayer for the Ephesian believers is, " that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the Knowledge of Him. For through Him we have both (Jew and Gentile) access by one Spirit *unto the Father*" (i. 17, ii. 18).

Jesus certainly called men to Himself, but it was that they might come to *God* as His sons and heirs. He was their Lord, made so by God. And whatever He was

to them after His death, it was, as Paul said, what He "had been made to them of God."

Weak and sinful as we are, we greatly need help in the Christian life and increasing sanctification of our nature; but we can find all that we need in a direct relation to God as revealed in Christ.

Whatever Christ may be to us, Friend, Brother, Lord, Teacher, Helper, and Saviour, it is an error, and quite contrary to Christ's own teaching, to put Him in the place of God, the infinite and eternal Father, who was manifested in His Son as seeking us for His children, and is ever with us in His Holy Spirit. A Theism that ignores the manifestation of God in Christ is inadequate, but it is different with one that builds itself up on that foundation.

Yet in much of the religious literature and preaching of the past—and of the present—"Christ" is everything and "God" only occasionally mentioned, or separately dealt with, even though much of our language of devotion is derived from the Old Testament in which "God" is everything. Instead of being "Christo-centric" ought not our Christianity be made more truly "Theo-centric," and God, our Father, have for us the place and value that He had with Christ? It was *God* who was manifested in Christ and did everything in Him, and, although Christ in the Spirit may be rightly regarded as being still a special organ of the Divine Father, it is still "all of God." It is "God," says the Apostle, Who "works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure." Our Father, Jesus assured us, is always near us, always caring for us, always ready to forgive and receive, willing to give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. When men believed in the Divine Forgiveness and acceptance, they found themselves possessed by a new,

holy, and loving Spirit—" the Spirit of their Father," which was in them " a Spirit of sonship "—" the Spirit of God's Son in their hearts crying Abba, Father ! " the very same Spirit that dwelt " without measure " in Jesus ; removing bondage, casting out fear, cleansing the thoughts of the heart, inspiring a universal love, a Divine peace, a holy joy, a glorious hope, moving them to the unselfish service of God and man, enlightening and strengthening them therefor. It is the very same to-day, found to be so in the experience of all who draw nigh to God as revealed in Christ, opening their hearts to Him, and keeping them open.

VII

CHRIST AND GOD: THE NEED FOR A TRUER PRESENTATION OF CHRIST TO MEN

CHAPTER VII

CHRIST AND GOD: THE NEED FOR A TRUER PRESENTATION OF CHRIST TO MEN

THE subject of this chapter is so delicate that one hesitates to touch it, but it must be done if our Christianity is ever to have world-wide acceptance. It shall be prefaced by a quotation from Dr. Denney, although I trust enough has been already said to prevent any suggestion of a humanitarian or "naturalistic" conception of the Person of Christ, or any desire to lessen the benefit that may be received through faith in Christ. The object in dealing with the subject is solely to make belief in the reality of God in Christ more vital, to remove unnecessary hindrances to belief, and to state the fact more in keeping with Christ's own teaching, with that which we actually see in Him, and with the New Testament generally, as we are now led to regard it. Our desire is to see the truth of *God in Christ* so stated as to be readily credible by *all* interested in Christianity as the saving power of God, and so that no one through inability to accept the definitions of the ancient Creeds, while feeling attracted to Christ, ready, perhaps, to believe in the manifestation of God in Him, and to accept Him as the Lord of the true life, may find himself shut out from the Christian fellowship and the common Christian service. We would plead for a more open door intellectually to the Christian Church, and for a wider Christian unity.

"There can be no Christianity to maintain," says

Dr. Denney in his *Jesus and the Gospel*, " if the evangelical truth is not asserted that Christ must have in the faith of men no less or lower place than He has had from the beginning, or than He Himself deliberately assumed ; but there can be no hope of appealing to the world in which we live to give Christ such a place in its faith if we identify doing so with the acceptance beforehand of the inherited theology or Christology of the Church. It is one of the most urgent needs of the Church at the present moment to have both these truths recognised in their full extent " (pp. 382, 383).

What was in Dr. Denney's mind may be seen in a letter to Sir W. Robertson Nicoll, and other passages in *Jesus and the Gospel*, to be quoted hereafter.

We commonly speak of " Christ " *and* " God," which implies the sense of a distinction between them, and this distinction is maintained or implied in all our preaching and theological discussions—Can it be right to say at the same time that Jesus *is* God ? If we think, as we certainly ought to do, of God as taking the initiative ; not of Jesus as incarnating God, but of God as becoming incarnated in Jesus, we can say truly that in Christ we see God—in human form. But the human form was a real human person or Divine-human person, *in whom* God was incarnated. Can this person, in His earthly life at least, be rightly described as being Himself the God who was incarnated in Him ? The alternative is not that Jesus was " a mere man " or " an ordinary man," but that God was in Him so as to manifest Himself in the life of a true *Son*, at once human and Divine.

The most earnest maintainers of the Deity of Christ acknowledge that it is a doctrine extremely difficult for some to receive. Men reading the story of Christ, as it is given in the Gospels, find it hard to be asked to

say that He whom they see there in every way acting *as a man*, continually speaking of *God* as other and greater than Himself, praying to God, trusting in God, solely concerned to do the will of God, saying that God had sent Him, living as a man amongst men, and dying, as surely *God* cannot die, is Himself the God of whom He speaks, to whom He prays, whose Will, and not His own, He always seeks to do.

Yet this belief which many, in all honesty of soul, and feeling the attraction of Christ, believing, perhaps, in the unique presence of God in Christ, ready to acknowledge His Divine humanity, and to confess Him as their Lord and Saviour, *cannot* accept, do what they may, which hundreds of thousands of different races and creeds can, humanly speaking, *never* accept, is placed in the forefront of the Christian Faith, and *has* to be received, or at least professed, if men are to be deemed Christians, or have a saving interest in Christ, or be members of the Kingdom of God and co-workers in its advancement; or they can only accept it after long and anxious thought and, it may be, "experience" of Christ. Is it right that this purely intellectual barrier should be set up or allowed to stand to-day, although deemed essential by the majority of Christians—most of whom, however, have never given a thought to the subject; or even if it be assuredly true?

The difficulty of the belief is admitted by the most competent and earnest defenders of it. Dr. H. R. Mackintosh, *e.g.*, says: "Whatever the cause, at least it is certain that many sincere minds to-day are conscious of perplexity and reluctance when presented with credal statements that in very truth 'God was in Christ'"—really meaning, as the context shows, that Christ was God—"that Christ is personally one with

the Highest" (*The Person of Christ*, p. 410). But it should be noted that the difficulty is not to believe that "God was in Christ," or even that He is, in His innermost self, personally "one with the Highest," but that He *is* God and *is* the Highest.

And it is not unbelievers only who feel the difficulty. Dr. Mackintosh quotes Dr. Haering (an accomplished Evangelical theologian) as raising the question of the proper designation of Christ, and as saying that "everything faith longs to say about Christ can be said adequately and lucidly without employing the term "Godhead"; *e.g.* by the phrases, "Son of God," "Lord," or simply "Jesus Christ" (p. 420). I may add that Dr. Haering mentions that throughout his work (the Eng. Trans. in two large volumes) he has never used the word "Divinity" in relation to Christ, and says that many who would be troubled by a revival of ancient metaphysical terms, find comfort and peace in the simple thought of Jesus as *Lord*. He concludes by saying: "that as being the full revelation of God Jesus is more than any 'god' of the religion of the olden time, but just for that reason He is not 'God,' otherwise He would not be a Revelation of God" (pp. 669, 670).

Yes, this is just the point: If He was the revelation *of* God, how can we say that He was Himself the God whose revelation He was? A clear pool may reveal the Sun (this, I think, was Ruskin's illustration of the revelation of God in Christ); but is it therefore the Sun?

Dr. Mackintosh quotes another German theologian (Faut) as saying: "It is unfitting to speak of the historic Christ as God, medium of the final revelation though He be. For it blurs the interpretation of His earthly life; also, it conflicts gravely with Jesus'

monotheism. The one thing we dare not do is to create antagonism between faith in Jesus and His own creed" (*ibid.*). The last sentence should be seriously laid to heart if we would bring men to believe in Christ.

To these references, one to Dr. Loofs may be added. He concludes his very interesting book, *What is the Truth about Jesus Christ?* by saying: "It is our duty to concede that orthodox Christology does not give us an appreciation of the person of Christ which is able to satisfy us" (p. 200). His last refuge is in "*the mystery of Christ*"; and no doubt, after all explanations, "great is the mystery of godliness."

Some even of the most decided believers shrink from the bald assertion that Jesus is God. Clearly, it gives only one side of His person, for He was also *man*. At most it can only be said that He was God *in human form*, God *as* man, or God as Son under the conditions of humanity. Or it might be said that the God and Father whom Jesus revealed, or rather who revealed Himself in Jesus, had so concentrated Himself in the Person of Christ that henceforth Jesus Christ should represent God to us, be to us "Immanuel, God with us," still human as well as Divine, He in whom God was and is with us to our help and salvation. But even so, *Jesus* would not be that Infinite and eternal Spirit, the Creator of worlds innumerable, the "Father who is with us in secret," whom Jesus asked men to believe in, pray to, and wholly trust. He would not be God absolutely, but a subordinate Being of whom we might rightly speak as *Divine* but not as "God." Followers of Ritschl can only say that for them Jesus has "the value of God."

There are Modernists who, while departing widely from orthodoxy, say they can with a good conscience speak of Jesus as God, because they find God in Him

and learn of God from Him, and see those highest values in life, which God means to them, actualised in His life. But such positions are only reached, as a rule, as the result of sympathetic thought and experience on the part of those who believe in Christ as that which He has " been made of God unto us " ; the demand that He must be received *as God* precludes many from knowing what Christ can be unto them—shuts them out from the possible " experience."

The late Dr. Denney was a convinced believer in the Deity of Christ ; but he evidently felt the evil of the way in which Christ is commonly presented. In one of his letters that have been published he says that he dreaded ways of stating Christian truth that challenged contradiction : " Jesus is God," he goes on to say, " seems to me one of these provocative ways, and therefore I avoid it. It has the same objectionableness in my mind as calling Mary ' the mother of God.' " And he points out that, " while the New Testament says, ' God was the Word,' it does not say ' the Word was God,' and it is this last which is really suggested to the English mind by ' Jesus is God.' " In the last clause of the Greek text of the first verse of chapter i. of John's Gospel (which Dr. Denney gives) the word for God omits the article before it ; the clause is rendered by Moffatt, " the Logos was Divine " (*Letters to Sir W. R. Nicoll*, p. 121).

In his great work, *Jesus and the Gospel*, Dr. Denney maintained that " What Christ claims and what is His due is a place in the faith of men—in other words, it is an attitude of the Soul to Himself as He is presented to us in the Gospel. We are bound to Him. . . . But we are not bound to any man's or to any Church's rendering of what He is, or has done. We are not bound to any Christology, or to any doctrine of the

Work of Christ" (*Jesus and the Gospel*, p. 382). It is not on the answer concerning these matters that a man's Christianity depends, "but on something antecedent even to the question" (*ibid.* p. 403). "The symbol of the Church's unity," he thinks, might be expressed thus: "I believe in God through Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord and Saviour" (*ibid.* p. 398).

But, unfortunately, this will seem to some to bring back what has just been excluded: "only Son" cannot mean only human, or only created Son, because "as many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God," and God has many such sons. It will seem that it can only mean Son in that metaphysical sense which Dr. Denney says it is not necessary for Faith that it should be accepted: Of the doctrine "that Christ is consubstantial with the Father," he remarks: "Whatever religious interest it is supposed to guard, it is a purely metaphysical proposition" (*ibid.* p. 392). "Very few people can tell what Athanasius and the Nicene bishops meant by this term. Every one feels that it is on something else than the understanding of such metaphysical terms that the life and union of Christians depend, it is their attitude to Christ which Christians have to declare—He can only be described in the simple language of religion" (pp. 392, 393). This, therefore, is not Dr. Denney's meaning. It is that Jesus was "*the* Son of God," not *a* Son, but *the* Son, in a sense in which no other man can be so; "no metaphysical solution or explanation is offered of the fact that Christ is to God what no other is or can be; the fact is simply declared, and if the Christianity of the New Testament, and of the consciousness of Jesus, is to survive, it must be declared when He is called God's only Son" (p. 399). Sir Henry Jones in an article in the *Hibbert*

Journal (republished in booklet form by the Rev. L. Jenkin Jones under the title of *The Idealism of Jesus*), criticised severely the assertion that Jesus is God's *only* Son, thus separating, as it seemed to him, Jesus from the men whom He called and calls to the realisation of their sonship to God. "It was the very mission of Jesus to bring men into the relation of Sonship to their heavenly Father." "Now are we the sons of God" was the Christian Source of rejoicing. There is certainly a sense in which the phrase "*only* Son" is open to such criticism; but there is also a sense in which it is true that Jesus stood in a unique or special relationship to God, which, however, does not make the sonship of others anything less than it is. He held also a unique or special relation to men who were none the less His brethren whom He sought to save in the highest interests of their life,[1] and He has had an influence on men possessed by no one else. But granting all this, it does not warrant the statement that Jesus was or is *God*; it was and is still God *in Him*; and, the alternative suggested by Dr. Denney shows that he was conscious of the difficulty involved in the common mode of statement. As a matter of fact (while Paul speaks of Jesus as "God's own son"), the statement that Jesus was God's *only* Son is based originally on the Fourth Gospel, or, perhaps, it should rather be said, on the speculative thought which it represents. Defenders of the doctrine still say, "In order to see Jesus to be God (or to belong to the Godhead) we must go back to the pre-temporal, to the idea of a pre-existent personal Logos or Son with God, in whom God became man"—some add that He might atone for human sin and so save men.

[1] He was *the* Son of man, but it would not therefore be correct to speak of Him as the *only* son of man.

This Gospel according to John was for long the chief support of the doctrine. For it was believed to contain Christ's "witness to Himself." But by most scholars nowadays that Gospel, whatever historical elements it may contain, is found to be largely irreconcilable with the first three Gospels, and is regarded as being an Interpretation of Christ rather than a history or report of His actual sayings. It is an interpretation of the Divine in Christ from the standpoint of the idea of the "Logos," rendered "Word," as an intermediary with God, sometimes regarded as a second God, who, the Writer of that Gospel said, became man in Jesus, while He is yet represented as retaining, speaking, and acting from His personal pre-existent consciousness as the Logos (or Son) who was with God in the beginning (as Wisdom personified is said in Proverbs to have been "with God"). In which case He was not truly *man as we are men.* And when we find this "Logos," never, for certain by other writers, regarded as a separate person with God, and described by some of the chief early defenders of the doctrine as being "the thought" or "the Reason" of God, we cannot but ask what God would be without His Thought or Reason? But not even in that Gospel does Jesus ever claim to be the Supreme God. If He says, "I and my Father are one" (a moral unity), He also says, "My Father is greater than I." He speaks of Himself as having been *sent* by His Father, as having come, "not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him," of "the only God" (or "the only one" v. 44), "the only true God" (xvii. 3). If He says, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," He explains it by saying that the Father is in Him and He in the Father" (xiv. 11). If Thomas can cry: "My Lord and my God!" Jesus Himself can send through Mary

the message to His disciples: "I ascend unto My Father and your Father, *and My God and your God*" (xx. 17). So that, in the light of this Gospel, He can only be thought of as a second and subordinate God.

It is often said that Jesus claimed to be God. If He did so, it would demand our most serious attention, however great the intellectual difficulties might seem. But neither in the first three Gospels, which are generally regarded as giving us the most truly historical account of Jesus, nor in this Fourth Gospel do we find any such claim. In the Synoptics He is always the *Son*, standing in a truly human relation to God as His Father, with a consciousness of such an intimate and immediate relation to God that He can with, as it were, a special appropriation, speak of God as "My Father," and in the consciousness of a special relation to God and His people as the Divinely chosen and constituted Christ, the Son of God and Lord of men, and, perhaps, the Judge of men. But it is always as the Messiah (the Christ), that He so speaks of Himself, He has always a distinctly human consciousness. Otherwise, we should lose what we have good reason to value so greatly, the *real* humanity of Christ.

The famous passage in Matt. xi. 27 f. and Luke x. 22, "All things were delivered unto Me by My Father; and no man knoweth who the Son is but the Father," etc., is regarded by many as a strong support in the Synoptics of the doctrine in question, coming, it is believed, from the early source Q, but it is held by some critics to belong to the later time of "the Church." [1] Certainly the term "*the Son*" (occurring

[1] Dr. Drown, *e.g.* in his very able book, *The Creative Christ*, says in a note: "It is questioned whether these words are an authentic saying of Jesus. They may not be pressed. His consciousness of an immediate relation to His Father is sufficiently witnessed to us in the Gospels apart from this text" (p. 53).

also in Mark xiii. 32), although it may have a Messianic sense, sounds more like the language of theology than that of Jesus, and the facts that it appears alongside of "the Father," and in the "little Apocalypse," the complete authenticity of which is also questioned, support the supposition. But even if the words first quoted belonged to Jesus in a moment of supreme exaltation, all is *given* Him *of the Father*; the Son has still here a subordinate position; the Receiver cannot be *identified* with the *Giver*.

It is the same throughout the rest of the New Testament so far as explicit teaching is concerned. God is always "God" and Jesus is always the exalted Christ, the Son of God and *Lord* of men. Dr. Mackintosh remarks that "nothing but irrefragible religious experience will explain the amazing fact that, without a tremor of hesitation, the Apostles took the responsibility of asking men to believe in Christ as Son of God from all eternity" (p. 35). There is, of course, a sense in which He *was* the Son of God from Eternity; but *when* did the Apostles so speak of Him, in the sense Dr. Mackintosh has in view, in clear, unmistakable language? Their religious experience was that of *God in Christ*, or of Christ in God. Jesus was always to them *the Lord*, and God was "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," whom "God had made both Lord and Christ"; "made *of God*," said Paul, "wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption."

Whether we think of Jesus as "the Christ" or not, yet as He in whom the life of God and the true life of man were revealed, who also made the great redemptive sacrifice for our sakes, rendering such supreme service as should give Him, according to His own principle of Service, the highest position of authority under God, He is the rightful, divinely constituted

Lord of men and the Lord of the Kingdom. This present Kingdom, however, Paul said He should yet deliver up to God " that *God* might be all in all." How then can we ask men to say that He is that very God to whom He should deliver up the Kingdom ? Why should we not be content to think of Jesus as *Lord* ?

It was that confession that in the days of the first Church constituted a man a Christian, made him a member of " the household of the Faith "—one which Paul said no one could make " save in the Holy Spirit." This is the position which Christ holds throughout the New Testament. There may be passages which seem to point to pre-existence (as the Christ was represented by certain Apocalyptists as pre-existing with God, as, indeed, many sacred objects were held to pre-exist, and as we have already seen Christ *did* pre-exist as Son in the thought of God). But that remarkable passage in Phil. ii., in which Paul is believed by many to ascribe personal pre-existence to Jesus, " in the form of God," is regarded by others as referring *immediately* to His position as the Representative of God on earth, who did not " snatch " at equality with God, like the first man (it is *Christ* Jesus Paul speaks of), but humbled Himself to the form of a servant (slave) and to the death of the Cross : " *wherefore God* highly exalted Him and *gave* Him the Name above every name—*to the glory of God the Father.*" [1] If He had been originally in the form of God as a Divine Person, How could God have highly exalted Him ? and His exaltation was in order

[1] The passage was so understood by Luther and by Dr. Dorner, the author of the greatest work (Eng. Trans., in five large volumes) on the Person of Christ ; it is so taken also by Dr. Loofs (*op. cit.* p. 221, referring to other critics also) and others to-day ; although it may indicate a *tendency* to exalt Jesus to the pre-existent Divine.

to " the glory of God the Father." But not to continue these quotations of texts, which are only referred to in order to show that even those who are willing to accept the Teaching of the New Testament are confronted with serious difficulty when they are asked to say that, not only have we in Jesus the supreme manifestation of God, but that Jesus in whom that manifestation was given *is* God, we have, finally, in 1 Cor. viii. 6 f., Paul's plain statement of the Christian Theistic belief: " to us there is (but) one God the Father, of whom are all things, and we unto Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through Him." One God, as contrasted with the " gods many " of those around them, and one Lord, in contrast with the many lords—probably such as figured in the " mysteries " clearly distinguished from " the one God." " Through Him are all things " may be supposed to reflect the Logos doctrine.

There may be considerations which should counterbalance all these statements, and men ought to be entirely free to give effect to such in their thought and creed; but ought others with whom these considerations do not have the same weight be compelled to accept a belief which Jesus and the New Testament may seem to them, perhaps, even to *forbid*, a belief which, in the light that shines upon them to-day, they cannot honestly accept? *Is it necessary?* Is it in the interests of the extension and realisation of the Kingdom of Christ, which ought to be the chief concern of all Christians in whatever way they may conceive the Kingdom, and whatever may have been handed down to them, or may be their personal belief? *To see God in Christ, to believe His Gospel, to hear and respond to the call that comes to us from God through Him* —is not this the one essential thing? Are not those

who do so members of the Kingdom, moved to be workers therefor, whatever their intellectual beliefs may be? Why then set up something else as essential?

There have always been some who could not conscientiously receive the doctrine, while they believed in the one only God whom Jesus declared and accepted Jesus as their Lord, and there are more who experience that difficulty to-day than ever, if, indeed, after vain efforts to believe, they have not drifted into indifference, which such an experience is likely to engender. It became a source of serious difference among Christians, a weakening of the Body of Christ in His service, and continues to be so to this day. To say "Jesus is God," in the natural sense of words, without at least adding "*in human form*," is impossible for many. Of course, as Dr. Mackintosh remarks (p. 420), difficulties need be no insuperable objection; but this is so only where the grounds of the assertion are quite clear.

Is it right then that when Christ is preached to men it should be in a form that makes it difficult to receive Him; especially is it right that those whose hearts go out to Christ, who would fain be the recognised members of the Kingdom, and co-workers for its present spiritual advance, should be excluded by their inability to accept an intellectual statement, framed nearly two thousand years ago, by men living, thinking, and speaking in a quite different intellectual environment, to give expression to a truth which might be readily received in a different form of statement? Is it right that an impassable barrier should be thus set up to those of certain races and long-inherited beliefs? Is not this to hinder needlessly the advance of Christ's Kingdom and the Christian salvation of tens of thousands of God's children? It is sometimes said that the firmest

ground for the belief is *experience*. But before we can have the experience, we must believe in Christ, and it is just the assertion that is made of what it is necessary to believe that may make the experience impossible for many.

Not a few who cannot accept the Doctrine of the Deity of Christ, as it is put to them, might be ready to accept Christ as their Lord and Leader, and in a very real sense their Saviour, and to enrol themselves among His followers and the servants of His Kingdom in this world.

The doctrine has been divisive from its first promulgation. Many, more favourably placed than we are towards the acceptance of the decisions of the Church Councils on the subject, were unable to accept them. It led to bitter feelings, to excommunications, to persecutions, to strife and bloodshed, and even to open wars of Christians against Christians, with very much that was quite contrary to the Mind of Christ and the Divine Love that was incarnate in Him ; and not without the strong hand of force did it prevail. It created an insuperable difficulty to the Monotheistic Jew, and it remains such to even the most Christian-spirited members of that old Faith in one God, which Jesus Himself held and proclaimed. It issued in a doctrine of the Trinity which, although not originally meant to be so, became a tritheism, as if there were three Gods instead of one God only. This gave occasion, or at least opportunity, to Mahomet to come forth as the prophet of the one God, and helped greatly the rise and spread of that Islam which is the strongest opponent of Christianity to-day ; besides the effect it has had on many thoughtful Eastern minds otherwise attracted to Christ, as all to whom He is truly presented must be. All this, it may be said,

has been counterbalanced by the benefits of belief in the doctrine. It may be so. It is certainly in and through Christ that we have our highest knowledge of God. Probably also many who would have been unable to rise to the faith in the unseen Father have been able to realise God in One who was an historical Person in this actual world who was presented to them as the Divine Son of God. "And so the Word had breath and wrought with human hands the Creed of Creeds"—which all may read. The missionary finds the same help in his preaching to the heathen—"to those wild eyes that watch the waves in murmurings round the coral reef," and many others. But how high has it raised the great mass of such believers in the past? How much has their faith told on the world? When we read history, or look out on the actual world of to-day, and remember the dreadful scenes enacted in Christendom but yesterday, we feel that surely, in spite of our orthodox beliefs, there has been some sad departure from God in Christ. In Germany especially, revolt from the doctrine in question, with nothing effectual put in its place, issued in widespread revolt from Christianity itself, and we all know the consequences. In all deep seriousness, and in a far more than a merely theological interest, it must be asked—How can we look for the salvation of the world or the realisation of a universal family of God therein, as we say we do, as long as hundreds of thousands of His children are shut out by barriers erected, not by Christ, but by men? Those who maintain them no doubt sincerely believe that they are thereby serving the Kingdom, but they are failing to realise how many they are excluding from it by insisting on a form of intellectual belief held to be essential—a form of belief natural enough to those who framed it, but

difficult or impossible to those who live in these later days, one also which some sincerely evangelical thinkers held to be *non-essential*. I am by no means pleading for a renunciation of that belief on the part of any, or merely that they should adopt a Unitarian view of Christ's person, which, in itself, might be of small value, and if the Divine in Christ were not fully recognised, and His call responded to, there might be serious loss ; nor is any doubt being cast on Christian experience, but simply pleading for freedom for all to form their own conception of the Lord and Master whose call may have reached their hearts and consciences, and who are willing to be lifted by Him into a higher and more fruitful life. If those who find such spiritual benefit to themselves, by believing in Jesus as God, would only think of the many they are keeping away from Christ by their insistence on this belief as necessary for all, they would surely see that there is a selfish element in their position inconsistent with Christ's teaching and Spirit, and with the world-wide aims of Christianity.

Another important aspect of the matter is this. It was to trust in and devotion to God as their Father that Jesus called men, it was " to bring us to God " that He died, and it was as our Father seeking for His children that God appeared in Christ. But for the greater number of Christians it is Christ Jesus Himself who occupies the place of the God and Father, of whose ready acceptance of all who really in their hearts come to Him, Jesus assured sinners. It is not suggested that Christians to-day do not believe in God, or that they do not find God and acceptance with Him by coming to Christ. But, seeing that Christ's emphasis was on God *as our Father*, while ours is on Christ as a Saviour, sometimes even from that Father

in His condemnation or Justice, is there not here a real departure from Christ and a serious danger of a limitation of our Christian thought and life? How many even good Christians believe practically, as Jesus invited us to do, in "the Father who seeth in secret," "who is with us in secret," the Father to whose love for all men there are no limitations if they will only come to Him, "who will have all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth"? No doubt this God and Father is preached, and men are invited to believe in Him, but it is in *Christ* that the practical trust of the many is placed, and it is Christ who is the immediate object of their love and devotion. A kind of Dualism of Christ *and* God has been created in which the mind cannot rest. The sentiments expressed in some of our Hymns towards Christ may sound very well, but are they born in the womb of Truth? are they honouring to *God*, and have they much influence on the daily life, or for the uplifting of the world?

Has not our Christianity, as professed, separated men instead of uniting men? Have we not allowed not only racial, national, and social barriers to separate us from our brethren, but even in the religion that was meant to unite all men, have suffered intellectual differences to do the same? Is not this one reason why Christian unity has been lost, why the world is as it is to-day, why *the Love* which all Christians profess, is so little seen and felt, why unity of Creed and not that of human brotherhood is the tie that unites Christians? Do we not need a wider and stronger union of *Christians* to-day?

Jesus Himself was ere long lifted so high above men that recourse had to be made to Intercessors with Him—to His Mother and the Saints as Helpers in the

life. It is not suggested that men were wholly wrong in this, for there may be much more in God and in Christ than our philosophy is aware of. But if our Lord's teaching concerning the Father as the constant spiritual environment of our life, the Lover of men and Object of their trust, had been held fast and put to the proof of experience, the need would never have arisen as it did. Whatever we may believe about Christ, our *entire Hope* rests on the reality of that Fatherhood in which His life was grounded, or its equivalent. It was " He who sent Me " that was everything with Jesus, and the first Christians, while living in an immediate relation to Christ as their exalted Lord and Saviour, never lost sight of the fact that it was to " the God and Father of Christ " they owed everything, as Jesus said that *He* owed everything, and that it was " to God " He brought them. While Christ was conceived at first in a very external manner, there are indications that He came to be thought of rather as a Spirit in their hearts than as a Person in some heaven above them. It was in the Holy Spirit that God was with and within them, which was one with the Spirit of Christ. It is in the Holy Spirit that the dualism is transcended. The Spirit of Christ became identified in their experience with the Spirit of God, that Spirit which rises in our hearts when we really come to God as Christ invites us. It is in our hearts " the Spirit of Sonship," " the Spirit of His Son," " the Spirit of Christ." " If any man have not the Spirit of Christ," said Paul, " he is none of His."

Christ in God was to them a " second Adam," the source of the new life of sonship to God. Why then speak of an absolute distinction between Christ and us ? Why say He is *God*, while we are but men, sinful and imperfect as we are, at our best ? We can hold

this relation to Christ in the Spirit, and yet devote and commit ourselves wholly to our Heavenly Father as His children come home, brought home, as the rule, through His manifestation in Christ, believing in His forgiveness, as through Christ He has enabled us to do, although conscious of much sin and unworthiness, looking to and following Jesus as the Lord of our life and our Forerunner into the life of the Eternal Kingdom, saying with Paul, " Whether we live it is to the Lord, or whether we die it is to the Lord."

The relation to us of Christ in God would thus seem to be, in one aspect at least, that of a new Divine-human immanence, influence, and helpfulness, in continuity with and completion of " the immanence of God " up to His manifestation in Christ. Therefore Paul speaks of Christ as being *in* men, and of Christians as being *in* Christ. It is " Christ in you the hope of glory " ; " If Christ be in you," he says ; " Know ye not," he asks, " that Christ is in you, unless ye be as reprobate silver ? " " that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith " ; " I live, yet it is not I but Christ that liveth in me " ; " He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit." The Fourth Gospel speaks in similar terms : " If any man love Me he will keep My word and My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him " ; " I will not leave you comfortless (as orphans without a Paraclete) " ; " the Holy Spirit will come to you," which is identified with His own coming ; " I will come to you " ; " I am the Vine, ye are the branches ; apart from Me ye can do nothing."

All this tended to identify Christ with the Divine Life—to make Him God to men ; He was, however, *the medium* of that which was the eternal life of God realised in its fulness by Him. The Spirit and power

of that life goes forth in its fulness from Him to be the life of all His brethren as the sons and heirs of God.

Important as are His teaching and earthly life and work, it is *the Spirit of Christ* (which is also the Spirit of God that possessed Him) that is the main thing for our life toward God our Father and toward men our brethren. It is not our beliefs merely, however correct they may be, but life and action in that Spirit that can advance the Reign of God in the world and make the Family of God on earth increasingly real. To let the Spirit of *real Love* always rule in our hearts and lives is to have " fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ " ; it is to have God living in us and acting through us. The whole problem of Christianity and Christian life may be simplified if only we remember that the Spirit of Christ and of God, to have which living in us is to have God living in us (and no man born of woman can have more or higher or better), is really that of *Love*—the love that God *is*, the love that was manifested in and by Jesus Christ, culminating in the Cross—the Love that alone can save the world. It is not that "love of Christ" merely, that an emotional Christianity makes so much of, but *Love itself*—the love that God *is*, the Love, apart from which, Paul said he was *nothing*, dwelling in our hearts and governing our lives, that shows forth our real love of Christ and can bless the world.

To say that Jesus was God is certainly nearer the truth than to speak of Him as " a mere man " or " an ordinary man." Although to say He was *God* may be to go to the other extreme. In no Arian sense was He the Son of God. When we remember that God is a moral Being it can also be most truly said (adopting ancient language) that Christ is " of one substance with the Father," not merely of " a similar substance,"

for the essence of every man's nature in its truth is moral and spiritual, giving Character; we were all created to be real Sons of God after the type manifested in Christ. If, as Dr. Mackintosh says, in words already quoted, "man is the son of God, even if a lost son, and it is his proper destiny to be partaker of the Divine life," why should we not see man's destiny realised for man in "the Son of Man"—man in his truth?

In Jesus God found man as the Son in the thought of whom the world was created, the Son that had been all along in His heart, whom He had been all along seeking and moving towards. In Him the creative Ideal was realised; to Him He could wholly impart Himself, according to man's capacity to receive.

Having so imparted Himself to Jesus and been so completely received by Him, this gave Jesus a relationship to God above that of any other man—the capacity was so great and the giving and the receiving so completely blended that in the culmination Jesus was wholly one with God. When the body of flesh died, Jesus *as a spiritual Person* did not die and could not die, but continued in that spiritual and real oneness with God (although still a human son), which it may be beyond our limited powers in this life to define. But in that life He is the "forerunner" and "first-born of many brethren," who shall also enter into that life in God and of God in them, for which they were "created in Christ."

It is all true that is said about Christ as the "Saviour and Re-maker" of men; but it was *God* in Him and it is still God in Him that makes Him so. And, surely, we cannot give a higher place to Jesus in our thought than to regard Him as being such an organ of the Divine as that the presence and power of God so filled

Him, and proceeded, and still proceeds from Him. " The highest place that Heaven affords is His, and His by right." Yet we get away from Him in so far as we give Him the place of *God*, and we make our Gospel incredible to many. As the German theologian (Faut), quoted by Dr. Mackintosh, warned us, " The one thing we dare not do is to create antagonism between faith in Jesus and his own Creed " (see p. 181).

In conclusion, while we can confidently speak of Jesus as being both human and Divine, as being in His Divine humanity one with God, and as Him in whom man's Sonship was realised, as holding thus a unique or special relation to both God and man, we cannot with the same confidence, say " Jesus is God." Therefore, even if we feel that after all that we can say there is something left unsaid, which, perhaps, cannot *be* said, yet for our brethren's sake, for the sake of the Kingdom, and in the wider and more efficient service of our Lord Himself, Dr. Denney's practice not to state his belief in Christ in any provocative way—such as saying bluntly and dogmatically, " Jesus is God "—ought to be followed. We can affirm Jesus to be the Lord of men, and in a very true sense the Saviour, the Son of Man and Son of God (without the " only "), or, best of all, as Dr. Haering suggests, simply as *Jesus Christ.* It is as such He is best known of men. In so speaking of Him we are denying nothing and pre-judging nothing. And if men receive Him in the practical way in which He seeks to be received, without His having made on His own part any such claim as many have in all sincerity, whether rightly or wrongly, made for Him, He will make Himself sufficiently known to them, and they will be free to formulate their convictions concerning Him, which, if He find His right place in the heart, will be in no

sense lowering to Him or despised by Him. We are too ready to imitate the man who put forth his hand to steady the Ark: the Ark of *God* could take care of itself, and so can He who is to us what the Ark was to those Israelites.

VIII

THE PRACTICAL PRINCIPLE OF THE KINGDOM: MUTUAL SERVICE

CHAPTER VIII

THE PRACTICAL PRINCIPLE OF THE KINGDOM: MUTUAL SERVICE

WHILE the Kingdom of God as Jesus preached it was a Kingdom of the Future, men were to become the members of it in the present. Membership of the Kingdom implies a *Community* of the members, and Jesus laid down the principles which should animate them and be by them manifested as those that should govern that Ideal Kingdom and Family of God for membership in which they were to seek to win the world. He did not send them forth as political Revolutionaries, but none the less the principles they were to cherish and act on were such as should effectually revolutionise and save the world. These principles should be applied in all relations of life, not excluding the political. If we consider them, however cursorily, we shall see how the members of the Kingdom should, if true to these principles, influence the world for good and tend to extend the present actual reign of God in it. We shall see also what a fine Ideal is that of the Kingdom, and how greatly the spread of its principles is to be desired.

The Life of the Kingdom is that of *Love*, and its practical principle for the action of its members was stated by Jesus to be that of *Mutual Service in Love.*

Mutual Service in Love is that which would naturally flow from the sublimation of self and membership in the Kingdom of God; from sonship to God and brother-

hood to man. This we may regard as the Ideal carried out in practice, the manifestation of the life of the Kingdom in this world and the preparation for the life of the Kingdom to come. We have virtually the same thing in what Jesus declared to be " the sum of the Law and the Prophets " : " All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye also unto them," the practical rule of all religion. But that, of course, to be carried out in the life, implies that the individual has a right conception of himself, that he has found his true self, that he is right-minded. It implies that we have entered that relation to God and man into which Jesus sought to bring us. Men without the right spirit might wish unreasonable, unfair, even impossible things to be done for them, which they might imagine they would do for others, were they in their position. So that the " golden rule " implies the golden heart if it is to be followed.

Again, He stated the sum of the Law to be to love God with all the heart and soul and strength and mind and our neighbour as ourselves, and showed in the parable of the Good Samaritan that the neighbour was not merely those belonging to the Jewish Community (our own Community or nation), but every man, even the much despised and hated Samaritan, who proved himself neighbour to the Jew that hated and despised him. But again, this rule to love our neighbour as ourselves implies a right self-love on our part, not that of the lower nature merely, but of that higher self which Jesus repeatedly declared could only be found by dying to the lower self, apart from which no one could be His follower or belong to the Kingdom.

But it is in His saying about *true* GREATNESS—greatness in the Kingdom—that we have the most explicit statement of what is practically implied in member-

ship in the Kingdom of God. In Mark x. 27 we read that His disciples James and John (Matthew says, their mother) came to Him requesting that they might sit, the one on His right hand and the other on His left in His glory (Matthew has " in Thy Kingdom "). This implied that earthly conception of the Kingdom from which it seemed impossible to free His disciples. Jesus answered that before He could enter into His glory He had a painful baptism to pass through, and even were they able to be conformed to Him in this, the place of honour which they sought was not His to give, it should be given to them for whom it was prepared (Matthew adds " of My Father "). The ten were much displeased with James and John, because it seemed an attempt to take an unfair advantage of them. Luke simply says, " there was a strife amongst them which should be accounted greatest." Jesus took the opportunity to lay down the principle which must rule in those who should belong to the Kingdom —which should rule in the ideal Community as distinguished from that which obtained in the world around them. " Ye know," He said, " that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles (the nations) lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them " (Moffatt, " their great men overbear them "). " But it is not so among you ; but whosoever would become " (Moffatt "wants to be") " great among you shall be your minister (servant), and whosoever would be first among you shall be servant of all ' '(Moffatt " wants to be first must be your slave "). " For the Son of Man came " (" Himself has come " (Moffatt)), " not to be ministered to (served), but to minister (to serve), and to give His life a ransom for many " (Matthew has suggestively, " Even as the Son of Man came," etc.). Luke (xxii. 25–27) omits the refer-

ence to giving His life, and has simply " I am among you as one that serves " (Moffatt) " as a servant."

The Kingdom, whether we think of it as here or beyond, is thus *a sphere of mutual service.* It is a Community, the members of which seek to render service to one another in love ; greatness and authority in it are determined by *service rendered* and by nothing else. This was what His Community was to show to the world, and so at once prove themselves the members of the Kingdom and attract the world to the Kingdom.

In the world as it is there are, of course, limitations to the possibility of a complete manifestation of the principle ; for Christians are not organised as a separate community. But individual Christians must adopt the principle, cherish the *Spirit* of service, and act it out in all circumstances. It is for *the Church* especially to give expression to it, and so help to uplift and save the world.

In a political view, the saying is agreeable to any *form* of Government which rests upon service rendered, or which *may* be rendered. If this is best given by a King, then a Kingdom may be instituted and upheld ; if best by a Commonwealth, then let that be the form.

The principle is one that applies to all the relations in which men stand to one another, the family, the community, the State, the Church, the industrial, business, and labour worlds, the Nations around us. If men in all their relations were to adopt the principle of service to their fellows, instead of those which animate them in general, what a different world it would make, what a new era it would usher in. Surely its announcement would be " good tidings of great joy " to many who suffer under present conditions. If those who strive for place and power in the State, or in smaller communities, would free themselves from all merely

personal ambition and petty rivalry, and seek supremely to render service to their fellow-citizens, there would be no lack of good government. If those in power made it their object to consider seriously how they could help the humbler people who cannot help themselves, there would come a great uplifting ; there would be no need to seek or dread the advent of an " unsettling Socialism " or a " destructive Communism " ; for people would find what is sought in these systems, with any degree of reason or justice, furnished to them. If those in authority made *service* to their fellows their supreme thought and aim, wise, just, and plainly stated laws would characterise the State, and bad and oppressive laws be abolished. If in relation to other nations they laid aside jealousies, suspicions, and self-seeking aims, and thought and acted towards them as they would fain have other nations think and act towards themselves, or in the spirit of service, " the Federation of the World " would be in sight, and the work which the League of Nations most laudably seeks to do would not be needed. As it is, it is only as a right spirit animates all that it can succeed. There would nevermore be war ; for war is never (unless incidentally) a service rendered. Although we may think we are thereby serving ourselves and, as things are, in a world which fails to rise to the true human life, nations may be compelled in self-defence and in defence of others to resort to it, even when victorious it proves injurious in many forms.

If in our industrial and commercial life the animating principle should be, not some personal material gain merely, but mutual service—which is really at the foundation of Exchange, as was manifest in the early days when goods or labour—actual service of some kind —not money, were the media, our business life would

take on a colour more appropriate to the relations of men to their fellow-men. If, instead of the mere service of self in whatever way might seem open, come of others what might, men would make it their first concern to serve their fellows and avoid what was clearly and unnecessarily disservice to some, how greatly would it elevate our activities; how much fairer, more brotherly and human would they be. Under-selling would itself go under, profiteering would be seen to be unprofitable (because it would throw the profiteerer outwith the brotherhood); under-payment of labour would be felt to be a sin against our brother man who had served us; the unseemly battling over wages would find no place; unsettling strikes would be unnecessary; all would be inspired to do their best in a brotherly service of their fellows; "the labour problem" would be solved. Mutual service would solve it. For whoever rendered service, be he Capitalist, Entrepreneur, or labourer, would be entitled to and receive answering service in some equitable form. The form of service may vary. Some might seem in this life to occupy a more pleasant position than others, and of necessity to reap a greater material reward; but if even the humblest toiler made the desire to render service his ruling motive, the meanest toil would be dignified, and the poorest man could hold up his head amongst the highest, for he also is a man, a son of God, fulfilling the Law of His Father's Kingdom, to which in its fulness he can look forward:

> "Who sweeps a room as for thy law
> Makes that and the action fine."

If service were the sole ground of *authority* over men, as Jesus said it ought to be, while the relation of Employer and Employees might of necessity con-

tinue, the present system of "Master and Servant" would cease. For no man can render such service to another as to entitle him to treat his fellow-men (equally sons of God with himself and, rightly viewed, his brethren) as being merely servants to *him*. Employment may be rightly regarded as service rendered to the employed, but, as things are, it is not, as a rule, given as such, but in order to serve the employer for his profit chiefly. It is often not *free* service on the employee's part, but a position which men are forced to take on the best terms they can make, in order to live. The very phrase, "the labour market," speaks its own condemnation. Men are sometimes not regarded as men, but as mere "hands," human parts of a great machine. While a man can take this position honourably, and seek faithfully to render the service expected of him, he has lost thereby something of his manhood. His labour is not felt to be a service rendered to his fellows, but something forced from him and rendered to an individual only, or a company or syndicate aiming at individual gain merely, which cares nothing for him *as a man*. Thus, instead of in this way serving his fellows, he may be diverting from them to private gain service which should be theirs. His mind may be given to his work, but the whole man is not engaged in it—only a part of him is occupied and a cut-out portion of his time engaged; he is not at liberty to render the wider and possibly higher service he might render, and may be anxious to render; there is something lacking to him in his position; hence a feeling of dissatisfaction arises. It is the craving for the fuller recognition, expression, and satisfaction of his manhood that is at the bottom of "labour unrest," the urge of manhood in him, something which, although it may sometimes, partly because of repression, assume

an unreasonable, unlovely, and even dangerous complexion, is divinely implanted in the man as a man, and must be met, the consequences of not meeting which is ultimately revolution and upheaval, and it may be ruin itself. It cannot be met by increased money payments and shortened hours merely, good as they may be for the time. Only the full manhood of every man can meet it.

Force can never abolish present conditions, but the principles of mutual service from men to men would do so. Right-minded men would endeavour, as not a few are now doing, to treat men *as men*, with the same nature and claim, desires, Divine ideal and destiny as themselves, and would, as far as possible, so organise industries and labour in general, that the workers would feel that they can take a real personal interest in their work as something which they as men are doing for other men, into which their whole manhood can be put, something in which they have not only a personal but a real human interest.

This is neither "Socialism" nor "Communism" (the compulsory institution of which would deny their name and be of more than doubtful value), it is Practical Christianity as plainly stated by our Lord, carried out in action—that life of the Kingdom and of God in the world which is so greatly needed and can alone save the world. Socialism and Communism, although they may often be inspired by high motives, appear, as commonly advocated (naturally, perhaps, in the circumstances), mainly Class movements, appealing very largely to the lower rather than to the higher nature. Their compulsory institution might involve much injustice and oppression of others; whereas the acceptance of the spirit of the Kingdom and the realisation of its ideals in life would be unjust to none

but of service to all, the enlargement, not the diminution, of human freedom and life. Jesus was no Socialist or Communist—*humanist* would be more truly descriptive. If there was a Communism in the Early Church it was not (as already said) compulsory or ordained from without, but springing from within in entire freedom, inspired by the love which is the Spirit of Christ. If we would see a true Socialism we must first have the true spirit of it—even the Spirit of Christ and of God in our hearts.

Nor does it mean, as is sometimes claimed, that all workers should share in the management of industrial concerns. Competent management is a special service rendered by those fitted for it, apart from which there would be confusion and failure, and is therefore entitled to its own corresponding reward. The service of production to as great an extent as is necessary, and that of distribution to those who require that which is produced, are also requisite in order to meet the wants of all, and if it was undertaken in the spirit of service, not *merely* for individual gain—beyond what is reasonable and cannot be eliminated—there would be " enough for each, enough for all," and at the same time a proper reward for those rendering the service.

The adoption and carrying out of this principle of Service might involve some sacrifice on the part of those more advantageously situated than others ; but our Lord taught that sacrifice is inevitable on the part of all who would belong to the Kingdom of God, or find that true self apart from which the gain of the whole world would be but loss. His own Cross was (as we shall see in another chapter) the supreme example of such sacrificial service, and the highest inspiration to it.

But is it not evident that, in order to carry out in

practice this great Christian principle of Service, men need to be raised above the dominance of self and the world, as Jesus by His preaching of the Kingdom, and His sacrificial death, sought to raise them, and, as response to His Call does raise them? It is just the kind of life that real belief in the Fatherhood of God and true Sonship towards Him would naturally produce. Human brotherhood cannot be "of the flesh" merely: it must be of God, and can only become a reality as men and women are delivered from the bondage of their lower nature into the freedom of the sons of God. Jesus had to die to the flesh, even literally, before the redeeming power centred in Him could go fully forth, or the Love that God is could be completely manifested. And all who would be sons of God and followers of Christ in the actual redemption of the world, must in their spirit die with Him. So dying they will also rise with Him, and through their influence the world will be gradually raised. This is practical Christianity. It is the life of the Kingdom of God in the world.

IX

THE SUPREME EXAMPLE OF SACRIFICIAL SERVICE: THE CROSS OF CHRIST

CHAPTER IX

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JESUS did not only state the Law of Mutual Service, but applied it to Himself as being not only the law of His life but the very motive that brought Him on His Mission. He not only called men to the sacrifice of self when necessary in the service of God and man, but gave Himself up to death as that highest manifestation of such sacrifice, which should surely be also the supreme inspiration to follow Him therein. He gave His Life, He said, to ransom, redeem, or deliver men: "Even as the Son of Man *came*, not to be served but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many"—a redemption price, as it were, paid by Him for them, the cost of their deliverance.

The authenticity of the saying is not absolutely beyond doubt; it is regarded by some critics as a "Pauline" or later addition. But, as it stands, it suits the connection remarkably well, and it is the clearest statement we have in the Gospels of the purpose of our Lord's death.[1]

[1] The Greek word (*lutron*) rendered *ransom*—although this may not have been the actual word used, which was most probably Aramaic—occurs here only in the New Testament in this saying. It is not a "Pauline" word. In the Septuagint version it has the significance of a redemption or ransom price for a slave, a captive, a life. It occurs in a compound form in 1 Tim. ii. 6, where it is said that Jesus "gave Himself a ransom for all." The Greek preposition

Jesus made this greatest possible sacrifice, He said, *in the service of men*, as well as in obedience to God, in view of which St. Paul says that, " having taken the form of a slave, He was highly exalted by God and given the Name that is above every name."

Well might this ardent Apostle of the Kingdom say to the Philippian Christians, " Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." Dr. Moffatt's translation brings out impressively what was in the Apostle's thought: " I pray to give me the utter joy of knowing you are living in harmony, with the same feelings of love, with one heart and one soul, never acting for private ends, or from vanity, but humbly considering each other the better man, and each with an eye to the interest of others as well as his own; treat one another with the same experience as you find in Christ Jesus."

used is *anti*, meaning originally, over-against, in the face of, often rendered " instead of " or simply " for " as here and in Matt. xvii. 27; Heb. xii. 2, 16. Dr. E. F. Scott in *The Kingdom of the Messiah* remarks that it has been pointed out that an almost literal analogy to the phrase is found in Josephus, who tells (*Ant.*, xiv. 10. 7) how the massive golden beam of the Temple was given up to Crassus as a " λύτρον ἀντὶ πάντων " (a ransom for all).

While various interpretations may be given to the saying, Dr. Vernon Bartlett says truly, in *The Century Commentary*, on this verse in Mark: " In Jesus' lips ransom is not relative to the just claims of Divine Law, but rather to the usurping hold which the Kingdom of sin has on man—it is not a penal death that is in His thoughts, but a victory over the powers of moral evil, one representative in its nature and efficacy."

At the conclusion of a long and elaborate discussion of this passage, Dr. Hastings Rashdall remarks: " If the words are genuine, they must be interpreted in a way which is congruous both with the context of the particular passage and with the ideas of Jesus as revealed by His other reported sayings " (*The Idea of Atonement*, p. 56). Dr. Deissmann takes the allusion to be to redemption from *slavery*, and translates: " The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister [as a slave], and to give His life a ransom for many [slaves] " (*op. cit.* p. 216).

We can well understand some one asking, "Is this Christianity?" "Is this really in the Bible?" But this is what follows from the possession of the Spirit of Sonship—such consideration for others and such mutual service as is befitting sons of God and human brethren in all their relations to each other. Practised, it would lead to such "transvaluation of values" as would transform the world.

I

In order to realise the full significance of Christ's sacrifice in relation to the Kingdom and the Divine Ideal for man, we need to free our minds from certain human interpretations of the Cross (whether these are valid or not), and try to see it as it appeared to Jesus Himself, and as it actually came to Him. While He made many references to His suffering and death, the saying just quoted in connection with service is (with, perhaps, the sayings at the Supper) the only one in which He stated a *reason* for His death. Whether authentic in this place or not, it certainly expresses that reason. It was *a service* He should render to others. *What was that service?* He was to give His life "a ransom for many," as the price of their redemption. *Redemption from what?* As Augustine saw, it could not be from *God*, who was giving up His Son. It could not be from the Father who was so earnestly seeking His children in His forgiving Love, whose Forgiveness Jesus had been announcing and dispensing. It could only be for their deliverance or redemption from some power that held them in bondage, kept them from God, and hindered the coming of the Kingdom; it could only be to ransom or free them from that power and *bring them to God.* Since the

ransom-price could not have been paid to God, many of the Early Fathers held that it must have been to the Devil, who had on account of Sin obtained the power of death over men (see Heb. ii. 14).

Taken in its connection, the ransom or redemption was *primarily* that of His disciples from the outward and carnal ideas of the Kingdom which held them fast in spite of all that He could do, to which two leading disciples had just given expression. Here they were still in bondage to this world; after all His teaching, after all they had seen in Himself, disputing among themselves as to who should be greatest in the Kingdom! To them it was still something outward and more or less earthly—a kind of political Kingdom, after the type of the kingdoms of this world. Unless they could be delivered from such views, and from such a spirit, they could not be "saved," and, of course, could not be the bearers of a spiritual and real salvation to the world as He sought them to be. All His teaching had failed to emancipate them; something *more* had to be done. Nothing short of His death, His departure from them in the flesh, could do what was needed. As long as He was bodily with them, they would still be expecting that He would set up the Kingdom in some outward and visible way in this world, as so many did, some of them saying, in their hearts at least, "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?" They would persist in thinking that Jesus was "He who should (in this sense) redeem Israel." But if He died in the flesh, if His bodily presence was no longer with them, while they still believed that He was the Christ, they would come in due time, as did Paul, to see that He was not "a Christ after the flesh" but "after the Spirit," that the Kingdom of God was not "eating and drinking,"

thrones and honours, but something far more inward and far higher—a spiritual and eternal Kingdom, spiritual that it might be eternal. Unless these disciples could be brought to realise this, there would be none to carry the message of this spiritual and eternal Kingdom to the world.

This certainly was one reason for our Lord's acceptance of the Cross. Identifying His Messianic Mission with that of the Servant of God in Deutero-Isaiah, He had seen from a comparatively early period that before He could come in power bringing in the Kingdom, He must suffer and die at the hands of men ; but if such was the Will of His Father for Him, it would have an important bearing on the Coming of the Kingdom. He had proclaimed its nearness, but it had not come. Instead, He found Himself faced by rejection and death. This did not lessen His confidence in the reality of the Kingdom, nor shake His faith in the Heavenly Father. But why should His Father give Him up to death instead of sending the Kingdom ? It was because it was essentially a *spiritual* Kingdom, which could *only* come as men were spiritually prepared to enter it. Where would have been the good of setting up the Kingdom in some outward way (supposing that to have been possible) if men were not fitted for it ? The Kingdom must first come in the hearts of men yielding themselves up to God in the Spirit. But the influences hitherto exerted had proved inadequate for this, save with a very few. Men were held in a bondage to ransom them from which stronger influences must go forth. It was to this end that the loving Father gave His Son up to die. It was the thought of what His death could effect for those disciples, for many others, and for the Kingdom, that made that which seemed so dark in the light of earth bright in the light

of God; "for the joy that was set before Him He endured the Cross, despising the shame." The same act that should ransom these disciples would operate as a ransom for many beyond their circle. It would be a call to a wider world, the supreme manifestation of God's forgiving love, not only for Israel but for man; it would free the idea of the Kingdom, and of Religion, from Jewish exclusiveness, break down the barrier between Jew and Gentile, "send forth salvation to the ends of the earth." As He is represented in the Fourth Gospel as saying when certain Greeks came seeking to see Him: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." And to His disciples He said: "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you," in other words, the religion *of the Spirit* could not be theirs. If *all* this was not consciously in His mind at that moment it was all in the Mind of God concerning Him in His death. Thus, instead of seeing in the suffering and death of Jesus anything contrary to the Divine Fatherhood, we have in it the supreme revelation, not only of the love of Christ, but of the forgiving and saving love of God. It was not only the sacrifice of Jesus, the Son, but at the same time that of the Father in the Son—not a sacrifice made *to* God but *by* God Himself for man's redemption—the founding of a wider Kingdom than one in Israel, even a universal Kingdom. The same God who was incarnate in the life of Christ was also incarnate in His death.

In the ransoming power of His death the final victory over the evil power that had opposed Him and the Kingdom, with which, as represented by "Satan," He had been in conflict throughout His life, should be gained. As He said in the connection noticed above: "Now shall the Son of Man be glorified, now shall the

Prince of this world be cast out." It was this same power of evil—this "strong man armed"—that had compassed His death. He had always told His disciples that it was *by men* He should be made to suffer and die—by man acting under the power of the world and in direst opposition to God, yet fulfilling the Divine purpose: "the Son of Man shall be delivered into the hands of men," etc. When His hour came He said: "Now is the hour and power *of darkness*." In this last trial the Enemy should do his worst against Him—the utmost he could do. But the evil Power should fail. He had seen "Satan fall like lightning from heaven"; the strong man armed should exert all his force and employ his deadliest weapons, but he should be overpowered and "cast out." He accepted it all; He let Satan, or Sin, do its worst against Him. By His acceptance and endurance of it in Love—in obedience to His Father's will and for the sake of others—Evil should defeat itself, or, positively, should be overcome by self-sacrificing and enduring Love.[1]

By that sacrifice the purpose of God should be fulfilled; it should have the power to ransom "many" from the bondage to this world in which they were held, and to bring in the spiritual Kingdom, of which men must be made members before they could enter the Eternal Kingdom. For this cause the Kingdom was delayed. Its failure to come was not because it was not a reality, but in order to give opportunity to as many as possible to become its members under the Divine influences *now* brought to bear on men. We see here that wider love of God who "desires all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."

[1] Was it not this *self-defeat* of Evil that was deepest in the thought of those Fathers who spoke of the ransom as being paid to the Devil, and of his being outwitted?

Jesus died that the Kingdom might come. Something more than words, more even than a life of loving service, as far as it had gone, was needed, and was provided by His death. He had felt Himself " straitened " till that " baptism " had been passed through. In Gethsemane He prayed that, if it were possible, the necessity might be met in some other way. But no; it was not possible, and in the divine spirit of Service that possessed Him—which was the Spirit of His Father in Him — He accepted the Cross and the necessity was met.

II

There may be other interpretations of the Cross, but to be valid they must be in keeping with what Jesus taught concerning the free forgiving love of God and His welcome to all who would come to Him, and to the presence of God in Him. Can we believe that His thought of God was so changed that He regarded the necessity for His death as that of offering an " atoning Sacrifice " for the sins of men before they could be forgiven by the God whom He had preached as the loving, seeking, sin-forgiving Father of all men? This would give us *two* quite different and irreconcilable views of God—which of them are we to believe? Moreover, if we are really to see *God* in Christ, and His love as the inspiration that led to the acceptance of the Cross, how can we think of God as making a propitiation *to Himself*, or, in Christ, " interceding " *with God* for sinners?

Dr. B. W. Bacon, however—to refer only to a recent representation by a liberal-minded scholar of repute—in his Hibbert Lectures, published in his book, *Jesus and Paul*, holds that Jesus came to believe that an atoning sacrifice was necessary, and that He died as

an Intercessor with God for man's forgiveness. The matter is so important, as affecting our conception of God and of Christ, that it may be well to discuss it. Dr. Bacon bases the idea mainly on the account of the sayings of Jesus at the Last Supper, which he holds is the only genuine passage in the Gospels on which the belief can securely rest. These Gospels, he believes, represent "a reaction from Paul's doctrine of Grace toward the new legalism of the Christianised Synagogue." But if so, why should a narrative affording, as he interprets it, such a strong foundation for what he regards as Paul's doctrine of the Cross be found in these Gospels; and what about the presence of the "ransom saying"? There are considerable differences with respect to the Supper narratives, and if the account he founds on was, as some hold, a "Pauline insertion," its value for his argument is lost.

Jesus, Dr. Bacon holds, failed through the unbelief of those to whom He came, not only in the first period of His history, but again when He assumed the Leadership of the people. "There was but one thing more He could do for the reconciliation. He could dedicate His body and blood as an atonement-offering for the forgiveness of sin that God might be reconciled to His people" (p. 45). "And this in the institution of the Supper was observed from the first." The same spirit, he remarks, may be seen in "a Maccabean hero" (mentioned in 4 Macc. vi. 27–29), who dedicates his life-blood in his people's behalf, praying, "Thou knowest, O God, that when safety was offered me I chose to die in fiery torments for the sake of the Law. Be propitious . . . to thy people, let the punishment suffice thee which we endure on their behalf; make my blood an expiation and take my life as a ransom for them" (p. 46). Again, on p. 49,

the author of 4 Macc. is quoted as giving utterance to sentiments similar to those of St. Paul, and as saying that the suffering of the martyrs " became a redemption (*antipsuchon*,) for the sin of the nation." But 4 Macc. is regarded by some scholars as being probably post-Christian, according to some belonging to about A.D. 38; the stories in it are taken from 2 Macc. vi. and vii., where the chief sufferer says nothing about propitiation, but regards his death as accepted by him in adherence to the Law of his God, and an example to his younger brethren.

" The Songs of the suffering Servant " in Deutero-Isaiah, " in his message to ' the crucified nation ' of the ancient world," contain, of course, the fullest statement of the doctrine of vicarious sacrifice, and this, says Dr. Bacon, " the legalism which followed the times of Ezekiel had never obliterated from the instinctive religion of the ordinary man " (p. 48). In the Aramaic Targum on the famous fifth verse of that Song, where it is declared that he is wounded for our transgressions to achieve our peace, the translator renders: " He will intercede for our sins and transgressions, and for his sake they will be forgiven." For this he is " exalted and made very high," and the Author of 4 Macc. represents the martyrs, as in Revelation, " pleading for Israel from underneath the altar of God's presence." Dalman proves, he says, " that the 53rd chapter of Isaiah was in some quarters interpreted as applying to the Messiah; the Targum on the prophets so interprets it, and the early Church did so. But," he adds, " there is no sufficient evidence that Jesus did, and the twelve clearly did not " (p. 50, note).

Not only Paul, but all Christians, says Dr. Bacon, regarded Jesus as their Intercessor with God; all was

for Jesus' sake. He is " the Intercessor and Mediator with the Judge of all; He is One who had been 'raised again for our justification'" (p. 47). " It is not easy to regard as an 'innovation' what Paul declares to be the essential thing committed to every ambassador of Christ, that which forms the heart of the message, in Revelation, in Hebrews, in 1 Peter as well as in Paul, to say nothing of Clement and the later writers" (p. 48).

Now, suppose we accept all that is said respecting the beliefs of certain sections of Judaism as to the efficacy of suffering, and the beliefs of Christians regarding Jesus as their Intercessor with God, which last were not unnatural if, as Dr. Bacon says with Arnold Meyer, " the belief in propitiation by means of blood *dominated the whole Jewish and Gentile world*" (p. 48) (italics ours), does it follow that *Jesus* entertained these Jewish and Pagan beliefs? Was it not an altogether *higher conception of God* He was bringing to men; and had there not been, in both Jewish and ethnic circles, protests made against belief in the efficacy of sacrifices? Jesus crowned the teaching of those who declared " sacrifice and offering thou hast no delight in"; " the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit and a contrite heart." He quoted the words of Amos, " I will have mercy (loving-kindness in the life) and not sacrifice." His God was not a stern Judge before whom men needed an Intercessor ere they could hopefully approach Him, but a loving Father who was *seeking them* in His forgiving love, longing to find even *one* of them, ready to forgive, however sinful they might be, if only they would turn to Himself, nay, coming in His Son with the word of Forgiveness on His lips. Was it not really to deliver men from these and other false ideas about God that

He died? As He approached His Cross it was not a dread Judge of men whom He must propitiate, or with whom He must intercede, if sinners were to be saved, He had in His mind, but the same loving Father He had taught men to believe in. Never was His confidence in that Father so touchingly expressed as when He prayed in Gethsemane, "O My Father! if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." And again, according to Luke, on His Cross it was, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do"—an intercessory prayer indeed, but not because He was offering an intercessory sacrifice. And at the last, it was, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." No; His thought of God never changed, whilst the necessity for His death became ever clearer to Him.[1]

[1] As respects the Cry from the Cross, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" it may be regarded as authentic in the light of the real humanity of Our Lord in His suffering, and taken as an encouragement to His weaker brethren. But it was always as "*Father*" that Jesus addressed God, and the utterance may have been a quite natural citation of the opening words of the 22nd Psalm, where one under rejection and suffering cries to God, and finds ultimately deliverance and vindication, and sees the ultimate triumph of God's Cause. It would be taken by the Evangelists as an instance of that fulfilment of the Scriptures they were so fond of finding. The influence of that Psalm is to be seen in the whole of the narrative of the crucifixion.

But the authenticity of the Cry is open to question. It rests ultimately on one single authority—that of Mark; it is omitted by Luke and John. It stands also between two statements of supernatural events that may well be questioned. The Cry may have been something that was thus interpreted. If it had had the meaning that has been given to it, it would have furnished the crucifiers of Jesus with a final argument against His claims, and the Evangelists were not likely to have inserted it in a narrative meant to uphold these claims (*vide* also Dr. Robert Mackintosh's *Historic Theories of the Atonement*).

On the general question, it must be asked, Does not Forgiveness because of the intercession of another tend to make that other appear more loving than the Forgiver? So, as a matter of fact, Jesus has seemed to some to be kinder than God? And, What of *Right* and *Justice*? If it was not *right* to forgive, how does intercession make it right? And, What of those who have no intercessor? The idea of the value of intercession was derived from dealings with human monarchs, not from true thoughts of God.

Coming now to *the words at the Supper*, on which Dr. Bacon chiefly, and as far as the Gospels are concerned, wholly relies, Jesus still thinks of His death as *a service rendered* to His disciples, the nature of which, however, is not defined. He was giving Himself up to death for their sakes, "for you," for their salvation indeed. But not necessarily as a propitiation, atoning or intercessory sacrifice that God might forgive them. Had He not already assured them of God's forgiveness, as He had assured many even of the outcasts of Israel? What perplexity this new aspect of God would have created in the minds of the disciples! What a descent from His Gospel of God as the forgiving Father of men!

His body, He said, was, like bread, broken for them: His blood was that of a Covenant. If He said, as Luke has it, "the New Covenant in My blood which is shed for you," or as with Paul, "the New Covenant in My blood," the meaning seems plain enough and in keeping with the idea of the Kingdom and of service rendered. The New Covenant which God through the prophet Jeremiah (xxxi. 31) had said He would one day make was that of a spiritual salvation, such as Jesus had all along sought to make men partakers of. The establishment of this covenant was

really the same thing as the coming in of the spiritual Kingdom. Therefore Jesus added the assurance, " I will no more drink of the fruit of the Vine till that day I drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom " (Matt.) ; Luke has " till the Kingdom of God shall come " ; Mark, " drink it new in the Kingdom of God."

The New Covenant that God should make with them was this : " I will put My law in their inward part, and will write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be My people, and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour and every man his brother saying, Know the Lord ; for all shall know Me from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith the Lord ; for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sins will I remember no more." The New Covenant was thus to be *founded on forgiveness*, as Jesus had declared the drawing nigh of God in the Kingdom was " the acceptable year of the Lord "—the day of Divine acceptance of sinners. What He says here is that it was made sure to them—sealed to them as a solemn covenant made with them, attested and ratified or sealed with His blood. Covenant Blood was not that of piacular sacrifice, but that which ratified or sealed a Covenant. His death was the assurance to them of its reality—it would make it effectual ; it would be the means of their deliverance from the Old Covenant of law and letter and all that belonged thereto, and make them partakers in a new spiritual life ; bringing them truly to God, it would enable them to realise His forgiveness. There is nothing here about Atonement or intercessory sacrifice. The words in Matt. xxvi. 28 " unto remission of sins " have long been widely regarded as an addition by the writer or editors. While the phrase is by Mark and

Luke attributed to John Baptist, it is nowhere else attributed to Jesus. If it brought them to God, it would enable them to find "remission of sins."[1]

Certainly, as Dr. Bacon says, Jesus did not stand still. He came to see that more than words and such influence as He had been able to exert in His life would be necessary before men could be brought to God—even the sacrifice of Himself. But *His thought of God never changed.* God was still the same all-loving, sin-condemning, but sin-forgiving Father. His sacrifice could not be necessary that God might forgive, but *that men should be ransomed from all that kept them from God,* and the life-giving experience of His Forgiveness —from all that hindered the coming of the Kingdom in its full spiritual power and universality.

The sacrifice was necessary before the Kingdom could come in power, and He made it. The Kingdom *did* then begin to come in its spiritual truth and power as a spiritual Kingdom preparatory to the Eternal. Its coming thus, however, does not sufficiently meet what Jesus taught concerning the Future Kingdom, but prepared the way for its realisation. His sacrifice ended the old age of national and exclusive religion and ushered in a new age of spiritual and universal religion. The Kingdom of God was "taken from" those who had been unfaithful to their trust and "given to a nation that should bring forth the fruits thereof."

[1] Concerning the phrase Canon Glazebrook remarks: "Many scholars on critical grounds regard it as an unwarranted addition to the text." He gives, as the decisive reason for rejecting it, that "no orthodox Jew could either regard a peace-offering as piacular, or hold that a piacular sacrifice could cleanse from sin, other than ceremonial offences" (*Journal of Theological Studies* for January 1919, p. 119, note).

The *Century Bible* has, "added by Matthew, who avoids the expression in connection with John's baptism."

Men, drawing nigh to the God whose forgiving love was there supremely manifested, found " remission of sins," and had a new spirit of love and unity quickened in their hearts ; there was no longer Jew and Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond and free, male and female, but *one new man* in Christ Jesus." " Made under the law," said Paul, " that He might redeem (ransom, deliver) them that were under the Law, that they might receive the adoption of sons."

To conquer sin, to deliver from the bondage of self and the world, to bring in the Kingdom of God in power, was the objective of the Cross. It was necessary to those ends, and the necessity was met by God in Christ. The fact that the Son of God was crucified by those whom He came to save has made men realise the terrible reality and evil of sin as nothing else could have done, and led many to repentance ; it has enabled them also to believe in the forgiveness of their sins, at the same time dethroning sin in the heart, and so shedding abroad the love of God within their souls as to make for the realisation of the Kingdom and Family of God on earth, and to fit them for the Eternal Kingdom. The Christ to whom many had looked for an outward and temporal salvation was now, after His resurrection, seen to be a Spiritual and Eternal Saviour.

It would have done all this more widely and effectively had the Cross been always viewed as Jesus viewed it. But when the price of the ransom of men from their bondage—" to bring them to God "—was no longer supposed to have been paid to the Devil, it became changed into a ransom offered *to God* for the souls of men, supposed to have been forfeited through their sins against Him. The sacrifice of Christ was conceived as one made to God in atonement for, or expiation of, the sin of the world. The loving, sin-condemning, but

sin-forgiving Father of Jesus was transformed into a stern Judge or Lawgiver who, before He could forgive, required His Son to pay sin's penalty. These ideas could never have arisen except through an almost complete ignoring of Christ's teaching and revelation of God.

The 53rd chapter of Isaiah in the Old Testament, and the letters of St. Paul in the New, have been regarded as the chief supports of this idea of Atonement. But, while the vicarious suffering of the consequences of others' sins, willingly endured, and for their sake, is something real, and may be salutary, it by no means follows that it is accepted by God as an atonement for them. Paul *nowhere teaches* that Christ atoned for men's sins in the modern sense of the word "Atonement." What he said, as meeting the Jewish legal opponents of his gospel of God's free forgiveness ("justification") of sinners was, that *God* was in Christ making an At-one-ment (the original sense of the word "Atonement" (R.V. "reconciliation")) of the world to Himself in His Righteousness—as the Author of a Law, with the penalty of death, which had not been exacted. The Jew asked, How can God be seen to be Just if He can thus set aside His Law? Paul answered that the need was met by the Cross, where God made "Him who knew no sin" to be Sin—treated as sin—"for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God (His free justification) in Him." Christ, he said, died *for all*, in the name of all, as representing all, so that, before God all died in Him—"If one died for all (as representing all), all died" (2 Cor. v. 14–19). And being justified by God on that ground, all also *rose* in Him. Before God, in this way, a new world had arisen; old things had passed away and all things become new. This reasoning was natural, with the

view held of God's relation to " the Law," and met the Jewish objection to the preaching of free forgiveness; but there is nothing in it about " atoning for sin " as it has been usually understood. It was to " show forth the Righteousness of God " in view of the Law (Rom. iii. 21, 25). Paul's Soteriology, in this aspect of it at least, was based on the Jewish conception of God as represented by " the Law " rather than on Christ's revelation of God as the Father of men. But it led Paul to that thought of self-identification with Christ that was the nerve of his efficient Christian life and service.

The God who has been represented in many human theories of the Cross is not one likely to attract men to Himself, but to cause them to shrink from Him, to keep Him out of their thoughts, as is actually the case with vast multitudes—or to seek some inadequate way of gaining His favour. He is no longer the loving Father yearning over sinners, seeking them as a shepherd seeks his *one* lost sheep, rejoicing over them on their return to their true home in Himself, making the greatest sacrifice to find them; but too often a God of Wrath, or, at least, of stern Justice, before whom the world of those whom He created for Himself is doomed.

It was natural that some of the first Christians, living in a world where sacrifices or propitiation were common—" dominant in both the Jewish and the Gentile Worlds "—should have thought of the sacrifice of Christ as being in some way a sacrifice for sin, and that Paul should meet the Jewish legal objections to the free forgiveness that he preached in the way that he did. But, while it was true that Jesus died on account of our sins, and bore in His Person the consequences of sin as these had accumulated in the Jewish

people, reaching their climax in the crucifixion of the Christ; and while we can see in Christ's great act of obedience the complete At-one-ment of man with God in His Person, and also that which made Him so completely one with God that He thereby "entered into His Glory" as the Lord of men, we nowhere find in the Gospels any suggestion of that idea of an "atonement" required by God before sin could be forgiven which has so greatly changed the conception of God as taught by Christ, with, on the whole, a retarding influence on the progress of the Kingdom as spiritual and really *God's* Kingdom.

Although by the first Christians, Jesus was regarded as the Mediator through whose deed Forgiveness had come to them, their faith, as represented in the New Testament, was centred in God as the universal Father, whose love was manifested in His giving up His Son to die for their sakes. Jesus died, they said, "to bring us to God," "that our faith and hope might be in God." It was to God's love and grace in Christ that Paul ascribed everything. While Paul had a theory of the Cross which met certain needs of the time, fundamentally there was no real difference between Paul and the Christ with whom he was "one Spirit," and His greatest missionary, one to whom we owe more than can ever be told—especially in view of the moral and spiritual life. The *Spirit* of Christ, or Christ in the Spirit, had possession of Paul, but what was urged by him to meet a local and temporary need ought not to be taken as a permanent explanation. Besides, as we have seen, Paul nowhere teaches that Christ, while He "died for our sins," made an atonement for sin to God. It was to show forth His righteousness in relation to His Law that Paul said Jesus died as representing all. "*God* so loved the world as to give

His Son," we read in the Gospel according to John: all was ascribed to *God*.

But still, the idea of *mediation* made to some extent a separation between many and God, and in time Jesus, conceived as the Son in a Divine Trinity, took the place of God with most and possessed the qualities which Jesus had taught His disciples to see in God. Whatever influence for good this has had, it was not that conception of God as the loving and forgiving Father of men as His children which Jesus preached, into union with Whom He sought to bring men. And in later times, when it was taught that the whole world lay under the wrath or condemnation of the God who created it, from which the sacrifice of Christ alone saves us, He who made this sacrifice came to be, not only more immediately regarded than God whose will He served, but seemed to love us more than the God on whose love all hope for the world here or hereafter depends—in response to whose Spirit the great sacrifice was made. The character of God and His relation to the world were so radically changed as to militate greatly against the realisation of the Ideals of Jesus, and we cannot wonder at the slow progress of Christianity as it has been presented to the world.

This is not the place to criticise at length doctrines of the Cross. The Cross of Christ has many aspects, and stands open to many interpretations as long as they do not contradict the teaching and faith of Christ, or obscure the free forgiveness of the loving Father. We have seen that in the mind of Christ the Cross was a necessary *Service* which He spared not Himself to render to men, and that His death was a truly *redemptive* death. But the necessity was not that of an intercessory sacrifice in order that men might be forgiven, nor was the Redemption that of a world

from the condemnation of God, but that of men from the forms of Bondage in which they were held. It was not " a mere act of Love, without a reason for it," but *necessary* in the thought and purpose of God ; necessary for man's redemption from self and sin and the powers of the outward world ; necessary even for the deliverance of His chosen disciples from their earthly and carnal views of the Kingdom ; necessary for the liberation of the Kingdom from Jewish exclusiveness and nationalism, for the doing away with of human separations and the uniting of all men in one family of God ; necessary for His own liberation from the limiting body of the flesh that He might come again in Spirit and power as a universal presence and Lord of men ; necessary in order that the exceeding evil of sin on the one hand and the exceeding greatness of the forgiving love of God on the other, might be shown and men led to repentance and the experience of salvation. For the sacrifice was not one made by Jesus *to* God, nor that of Jesus as if apart from God, but that also of God Himself in Him ; made to win us for Himself and His Kingdom.

Most Christians, however, still believe in the reality of an " Atonement " made by Christ for sin, although the coarser forms of that belief are passing away, and as long as it does not darken their thought of God it may not harm them. For some also, with the ideas of God under which they have grown up, it may be the only way in which they can be enabled to realise their forgiveness. This has been illustrated in the noble work of the Salvation Army and other rescue agencies. The love manifested has made up for any lack in the doctrine, and it is practical saving power that is needed. It is held by some also that a real Atonement was needed *on the human side* so that men

conscious of having done wrong, possibly of having injured others, and unable to tell how far the evil they had done might spread or how deeply it might enter, unable themselves, except to a very limited extent, to make reparation, might be able to feel that something has been done that will allow them to rest in the thought of their forgiveness with a peaceful conscience. Perhaps this is one source of the hold that the need of atonement has on the mind, and of the belief that an adequate atonement was made by Christ as representing us all. But although Jesus may have identified Himself with sinful men, it is difficult to see how such an atonement could be made by one who had never sinned, who was not the actual evil-doer, especially, how He could atone—make amends or reparation—for sins and crimes that had not yet been committed. It is difficult to see how atonement in the sense of making amends could be made at all in the face of the Justice with which Mercy must always be at one. But, regarding the Cross as not only that of Jesus but also that of God in Him, we have something far better in it than any such atonement as is craved for, and more fit to give a *worthy* peace of mind : we see God in Christ taking on Himself, allowing to light on Himself, the worst consequences of sin as it had reached its head in that Jewish people. Although *we* cannot make reparation to God, or fully to those we have injured by our sin, or undo the evil we may have done, we can thankfully accept *the free forgiveness* of Him who knows all, who cares for all and controls all, who can bring good out of evil and cause all things to work together for the best. Beyond anything that *we ought to do*, we can commit others and ourselves to God, leave all in His hands, and thus have the peace of God in our hearts, while we realise

the magnitude of His Mercy and the greatness of His Redemption in Christ.[1]

But whatever more we may see in the Cross that can be harmonised with our Lord's teaching concerning God, it was the supreme example of the *service* necessary for bringing in the spiritual Kingdom, and it continues to be the supreme inspiration to such service on the part of all who would be co-operators with God in His work of world-salvation. This significance of the Cross has been too little recognised and laid to heart.

To put it in a few words: Jesus believed that His death was necessary and willed by God for the sake of the Kingdom. The Kingdom, He had taught, called for Sacrifice. Men, in order to rise to their true life as sons of God, must die to the lower, merely individual, life, if they would find true self-expression; if they were really to belong to the Kingdom and serve it, He called *all* to such sacrifice of self. According to the Fourth Gospel, at a critical moment, He likened His own death to the grain of wheat sown in the earth: "Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit." We have seen the wondrous fruits of deliverance which the death of Jesus bore, the fruits of Redemption in almost countless forms. We have thus,

[1] The late Dr. Denney was the advocate of an elaborate doctrine of the Atonement. But in a letter to Professor Carnegie Simpson there is a passage well worth quoting in this connection: "I have often wondered," he said, "whether we might not say that the Christian doctrine of the Atonement just meant that in Christ, God took the responsibility of evil upon Himself and somehow subsumed evil under good . . . ." "I fancy," he continued, "it was something like this that Calvin had in mind when he said that God did not make His noblest creature *ambiguo fine* without knowing what for, *i.e.* He was quite prepared to take all the consequences, and He took them in Christ. But, who is sufficient for these things?" (*Letters to his Family and Friends*, p. 187).

we repeat, in the giving of Himself up to death by Jesus the supreme illustration of sacrifice for the Kingdom's sake and the highest inspiration to its service. This aspect of the Cross, which carries in it all else, but has been overshadowed by other conceptions, is its most important aspect for the present time.

Had that sacrifice not been made, the Gospel would never have gone forth to all the world. As Dr. Bacon has said truly (although it does not require his view of the Cross), "had Jesus' appeal to Jerusalem succeeded, the Gospel would have remained primarily the affair of the Jewish people. In all the domain of the might-have-beens, surely there is no better founded statement than Paul's, that the rejection and death of the Messiah at the hands of His own people was unavoidable in the providential ordering of the world—if the ancient wall of partition was to be broken down and the Gentile world made fellow-heirs of the promise with the election of God" (*Jesus and Paul*, p. 44). In other words, it was inevitable if the Kingdom of God was to go forth as that spiritual, universal, all-inclusive Kingdom that it is, and if not a few but "many" were to be brought to God and fitted for membership in the Eternal Kingdom, and made in this world the members and representatives of that Kingdom.

The *Death* of Jesus, it should also be noted, was the necessary prelude to all the influences which flowed from His "Resurrection," however that may be regarded. These were of no small account in confirmation of His Gospel as "bringing Life and Incorruption to light" and as confirming faith in the reality of the Eternal Kingdom. If Jesus believed that He was to come again from God, He must also have believed that He must first *die*.

X

RESTATEMENT: FUTURE PROSPECTS AND HOPES: THE DIVINE FATHERLY PURPOSE: "GOD ALL IN ALL"—A WORTHIER AND MORE OPTIMISTIC FAITH: THE IDEAL OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST, ETC.

CHAPTER X

RESTATEMENT: FUTURE PROSPECTS AND HOPES: THE DIVINE FATHERLY PURPOSE: "GOD ALL IN ALL"—A WORTHIER AND MORE OPTIMISTIC FAITH: THE IDEAL OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST, ETC.

WE have seen that the Kingdom of God, as preached by Jesus as His Gospel, was something that God Himself was to establish—a new world in which His will should be perfectly done and His Children inherit all that His Fatherly heart had designed for them in their creation—in which the Right and the Good should be eternally one; it was the Realm of "Eternal Life." We have also seen that membership of the Kingdom was to be entered on here, and its life manifested in this present world.

Jesus regarded men as being ideally the sons of God, created for a higher and more enduring life than that of this world. It was not on earth that their true good could be found, but in a life with God, for the loss of which this whole world could not compensate them. This world was in His view only temporary and preparatory. Men had been made partakers in the life of Nature in order that they might rise to a higher life of God in them, realising that sonship to God in the ideal of which they had been created. They must, therefore, die to the lower Nature-self as dominant over them, in order that they might find a higher and

truer self in which God should be supreme. He therefore called on all to set their hearts, not on the things of earth, but on those of a higher Order than that of this world, to let themselves be guided and governed, not by " the things which are of men," but by " the things which are of God." And in this He set them His own example in following these ideals, to whatever they might lead them, as they led Him to the Cross. Each one must take up his own cross and follow Him. He bade them be free from anxiety even as to the things necessary for the earthly life, live their natural life naturally, like the lilies and the care-free birds, and trust their Heavenly Father in His universal Providence for all that they needed : " your Heavenly Father knows that ye have need of all these things." " Have faith in God " was His great word for all in all circumstances, while of course they used the reason and faculties which made them superior to the lilies and the birds, responsible beings, who sought to do that which was right.

This teaching may at first sight appear to some calculated to lead to an unnatural and unwholesome detachment from human life on the earth, to cutting ourselves off from the interests of men in this present world, in fact, to " other-worldliness " and the ignoring of our earthly relationships and duties under guise of devotedness to higher things.

NOT INDIFFERENCE TO THIS LIFE

We have seen, however, that these consequences by no means follow where there is a real response to the call of Christ, but the very reverse. Jesus had the true philosophy of Life. The Life that He called men

to is that which, if faithfully followed, will lead to the highest well-being of men in the world. It views man as God created him to be, and brings into the world the very life of God in man—the only power that can uplift and save the world. The Christian man has died to himself merely, and to the world as an end in itself: he has opened his nature to God that God may possess him and use him in His service. Jesus knew quite well that He was addressing men whose life was founded in Nature, that, as surely as we are created for a higher life we are constituted for life in this world—apart from which the higher life would not be possible—and that our natures as belonging to the world would compel us to take our part in its life. But we would at the same time be raised above its dominance; we would bring a higher spirit into the world's life which would act as a leaven therein. The "sons of the Kingdom" would be the "sons of God" in a world in which the life was mainly that of children of men, or of Nature, governed chiefly by the desire of earthly gain and earthly good. They would thus be the lights of the true life to the world, "shining," as Paul put it, "as luminaries in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation," showing "the way of life" by their rising above the power of the world to devotion to the will of God and the supreme good of men. If true to their heavenly calling, if seeking the righteousness that belongs to the Kingdom and giving expression to it in their actions, they could not but be uplifting influences—seeking also to win men for the Kingdom, and living so as to attract them to it. If really the sons of God, they would prove themselves to be true brothers to all men: if their supreme desire was to do the will of the all-just and all-merciful Father, their spirit would be that of the love

which in God goes forth to all, without exception; it would be the very life of God living in and acting on the world through them as its bearers. Hence the responsibility that Jesus said rested on them so to live; to see to it that the light that had been kindled in them did not become darkness, nor the salt (that was in them) lose its savour.

THE HUMAN ELEMENT IN THE ANNOUNCEMENT

Certainly, there was in Christ's conception of the Kingdom an element which belonged to Him as human, the inheritor of the beliefs and expectations of His people. The Kingdom did not come as He preached it and expected it to come: experience and fuller knowledge have taught us that we cannot look for the fulfilment of God's purpose for His children in the way Jesus pictured it outwardly. This local and human element must therefore be discounted. But if we believe Jesus to have been inspired by the God of Whose Spirit in man He was the highest expression, with Whom He ever lived in closest communion; if we can really believe that in some real sense God was in Christ, there was a deeper and permanent element in His Gospel. God does not dwell in the intellects any more than in the bodies of men; He does not teach in human words or conceptions; with respect to these we have to learn by thought and experience. This holds good for all who are human; it held good for "the man Christ Jesus." The dwelling and inspiration of God are in the spirit; His teaching comes through spiritual contact and inspiration. Spiritual truth may and must be apprehended by man in forms naturally reached, the Divine is

in the reality underlying these, which they may only very imperfectly express. To those with fuller intellectual knowledge they may become even untrue, while the spiritual substance remains. It is in the spiritual teaching and life of Jesus that we have the manifestation of the Divine. These greatly transcended the forms in which the Kingdom was represented. Others had thought of the coming Kingdom in similar, though less spiritual, ways, and many at the time were so thinking of it. Jesus purged these forms of all that was unspiritual and earthly merely. He made inward righteousness an imperative condition of the inheritance of the Kingdom ; He freed it from national limitations, and from all that pertained to the nature-self. All men possess such a nature-self directed to the present outward world and its offered good. The good of the Kingdom, Jesus taught, was quite different from that which this self desired and obtained, men must renounce it, die to it, rise above it to a higher, truer, diviner self, if they would be sons of God and members of the Kingdom. In His teaching concerning God as Father, and men as wandering sons whom their Father was seeking in forgiving love, even as a shepherd would seek his one lost sheep, concerning the need for dying to the limited nature-self, the universal love that made men truly sons of the Father, the righteousness that, seated in the heart, consisted solely in " doing the will of God " and loving all men, with the good will which God in His ordinances of Nature shows toward all alike, and in His own life of obedience and helpful love, culminating in His self-sacrifice for their sakes, Jesus far transcended all previous Teachers and Leaders of men, and became a Divinely-moved Saviour.

But can we accept His moral and spiritual teachings

and ignore the relation they had to the Future Kingdom ? We cannot if we are to be loyal to the Teacher ; for, apart from the prospect of the Kingdom, these—although they do not lose their value—have quite a different setting from that which they had with Jesus, and in one aspect, indeed, they do lose their value. For, although abstract values, such as righteousness and love, or as they are commonly stated to-day, "Goodness, Truth, and Beauty," can be thought of in themselves, they have no practical reality apart from the *Persons* in whom they have been realised. We cannot do justice to Jesus if we accept all else except that which was His *gospel* to men. This we must seek to see in such a way as shall make it a real gospel for all time and for all men—*the* gospel indeed. And if we find its deepest significance to be the ultimate triumph of God over all that can be against Him and His children, the ultimate victory of good over evil, the fulfilment of the Divine creative purpose, we have something which all right-minded persons can cordially accept and rejoice in.

JESUS AND THE WORLD

However strange it may seem to us, Jesus did not believe that the world would grow spiritually better in virtue of anything in itself. His disciples should be in it, at first at least, as "a little flock," hated of all men for His sake, persecuted, killed. He sent them forth, He said, "as lambs into the midst of wolves." But, whatever might be their experience, God by His Spirit, or as one Gospel has it, Jesus Himself, should be with them to help them, and not a hair of their heads should perish—their *eternal life* should be sure to them, so strong was His confidence

in the Future Kingdom. In the Johannine Writings the distinction between Christ and His followers and "the world" is very prominent, also the opposition between God and "the world." There was a "Prince of this world" over against God. In the first Gospel it was "Mammon." We know what some of the Gnostics made of this: the God of the world was held to be a different Being from the God and Father of Christ. But, with Jesus, the Father was also the Creator of the world. Possibly the explanation may be that only sufficient creative energy was imparted at first to enable the human stage to be reached, fresh spiritual influences being required to raise men into spiritual life and sonship to God, and these were always going forth. As the result, partly of such influences, especially of those proceeding through Christ—the influences of "the Spirit of Christ," and partly of natural human progress in moral and social life (which we, as human beings, ought not to need religion to urge us to provide), the world has improved greatly in nearly every aspect of its life. But the heart remains unchanged, and history shows how long continued was the animus towards those solely devoted to God, and it is not wholly absent yet. However great the progress may have been, it still stops short of that which Jesus affirmed to be the true life of man. And we have seen again and again, and in recent years appallingly, how, after great material, intellectual, and moral progress had been made, and we were rejoicing that our Christianity was becoming more effective in social and national life, men were, in a moment, as it were, carried back into action which, however inevitable, could not in its expression be reconciled with the teaching or Spirit of Christ, bringing suffering and death to millions and consequences to civilisation from which

it will take long to recover. We may witness, not only well-directed efforts towards recovery, but still greater advances (and with all that makes for Justice and human well-being by whomsoever advocated, every true follower of Christ must sympathise and co-operate). But not till there is a wider and deeper response to the call of Christ can there be real hope for the world.

THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

Christianity is supposed to have proved itself much truer to Christ by in recent years directing its efforts to the abolition of evils in human social and national life, and to the attainment of better conditions for all. But, while the bursting of mere individual satisfaction is something to rejoice in, and efforts to help our kind in every way possible the necessary outcome of the Christian spirit, the aim of Jesus was not directly the improvement of earthly conditions, but the raising of men from a lower to a higher degree of inward and spiritual life, and it is as the result of such uplifting of men that the world will permanently benefit. It was *man as God's child*, created for Himself, that was central with Christ, man, not in his relations in the world—with which on one occasion He decidedly refused to interfere—but man in his relation to God and the eternal—man as God's child. This is what many of us have need to wake up to see ! The Kingdom of God as Jesus preached it can never be realised by means of direct action on the world, however desirable and even imperative, from a human point of view, this may be. Even though we had everything *perfect* in earthly relationships, the Kingdom (regarded as capable of being realised on this earth) might still

be far away, and merely temporal well-being take the place of God's purpose for man. It is as the Divine ideal of man in this world is reached—that is, as man rises into that life of sonship to God to which Jesus called us—that a brotherhood above that of flesh and blood—above its tendencies and passions—will become actual, and the world be uplifted and saved: "Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother, and My sister, and mother." [1]

THE ONLY REAL AND ULTIMATE GOSPEL

In previous chapters the Gospel of the eternal Kingdom has been presented as the only real and ultimate gospel. The Kingdom in this aspect represents God's provision for His human children, that in which His creative purpose will be realised; that in which they will find the eternal Good for which His love gave them being; that in which, indeed, the rationality of the creation will be manifested. Jesus gave no support to the idea of those who hold that human beings have no claim on their Creator, or that we have no right to look for ultimate rectification of the injustices we suffer from, or compensation for our endurance of evils not self-inflicted; or that we should be content with the idea of a consummation in which the moral and spiritual are not seen to be one with the good (on the necessity for this agreement see Sir Henry Jones' *Gifford Lectures*). Christ's Gospel of the Future

[1] Dean Inge says truly: "It is other-worldliness which alone can transform this world. The advance of civilisation is in truth a kind of by-product of Christianity, not its chief aim . . . we can appeal to history to support that this progress is most stable and genuine when it is a by-product of a lofty and unworldly idealism" (*Personal Religion and the Life of Devotion*, p. 84).

was distinctly one of redress and compensation, of the compassion and fatherly sympathy of God, of realisation of a Divinely-intended Good which had never been realised here.

Should it be said that the good is already found in the spiritual character of the individual, it is certainly not a permanent good if the indivídual disappears in death, and it has had too often associated with it evils that had no rational relation to it. Thus far, I think, Kant's argument was sound. Above all, it is not consistent with that Fatherhood of God on which all we can hope for rests. If we can really believe in anything that can be described as *Fatherhood* in God (and that means also if Jesus Christ is really to us what we say He is), we cannot but feel confident that He who originated a creation that should issue in human beings, with a loving and rational purpose before Him, had full knowledge of what He was doing and of His power to carry it out—with, of course, the co-operation He could rightly expect. Not to have this faith in our Creator is to fail to honour and trust Him as we ought. It is a genuine test of our sonship to God, as well as of our belief in Christ and regard for our fellow-men. "If ye who are evil (relatively to Him who alone is absolutely Good) know how to give good things to your children, how much more will your Heavenly Father give good things to them that ask Him," said Jesus. We *do* ask Him, in our hearts at least, for that which can only be given us in a life beyond the present. If God has created us to be children to Himself, that relationship can only find its realisation in a spiritual Realm, which is that of the life of God.

THE LIFE BEYOND

To say that we return to God, become absorbed in the Infinite Spirit or Absolute Being, gives no satisfaction. If our personality be lost, *we* are lost to ourselves, and we are lost to God as the children He sought in His Creation. Moreover, it would be an impossibility for those not in union with God.

If there are those who do not wish for continued existence, it need not be forced upon them. But it is not *our* wishes that have to be considered, for these may be greatly perverted, but the just and fatherly character of God and His purpose in our creation, the evasion of which, were it possible, would certainly be the greatest of injuries to ourselves. Most recent writers on God and Immortality say, after all arguments and discussions, that our belief in a hereafter depends at last on the character of God as Love: the two stand or fall together. If there is nothing for human beings beyond this earthly life, we cannot believe that the worlds have their origin in a creative Love: if they do have such an origin, then satisfying life beyond our present experience is sure, if we comply with the necessary conditions of its attainment.

For those who are already in personal union with God it is certain, if anything is certain, that this union cannot be broken; they already possess Eternal life, and can only have it in greater fulness and perfection. There may be degrees in the measure of this union. Its possibility is not confined to those who have had a knowledge of Christ or even of God as revealed in Him. In the picture of the Judgement of the "nations"—the "heathen," those outside the pale of Israel—the Kingdom is represented as having been "prepared from the foundation of the world" for many who apparently

had never heard of Christ, but who had cherished the Spirit of Love in their hearts and acted in it. To them He says: "Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared *for you* from the foundation of the world." This is, of course, an external representation of spiritual realities, and, as has been already said, it is not for certain all due to Christ *as we have* it. But it is in full keeping with His Spirit, and with His sayings, that many should come from all quarters and sit down in the Kingdom of God, while those to whom the knowledge of God and the promise of the Kingdom had come should be shut out, and "whosoever shall do the Will of God, the same is My brother, and my sister, and mother." The inheritance of the Kingdom does not depend on knowledge, nor on race or nationality, nor on Creed or Church, but on the *spirit and life*, and what is begun here can be developed in Eternity. Otherwise the family of God would be relatively a very small one. The life that Christ called men to was one inspired by love, and found its expression in "doing the Will of God."

NO LIMITATIONS

But our thought must go beyond those who are already in this life in some real measure in union with God. The life beyond, of which Jesus spake, was not only one that, as the life of the Kingdom, was open to all who sought it earnestly, but one in the light of which all should stand. Although many might be found unfit for the blessed life of the Kingdom, all should be *judged* and all should experience the results of the judgement, some with joy, some with shame, some with bitter disappointment, some with angry resentment. There is implied, not only the life of

the Kingdom, but also an existence outside of the Kingdom. The bright banqueting hall is there, but also " the outer darkness " : the satisfaction and joy, but also " the weeping and gnashing of teeth " of disappointment, not only of the " wicked," but of the merely outwardly righteous, the self-satisfied, the false, and the selfish. The whole world is there in one form or other. Men are finding the issues of their life according as it has been lived. The Father's heart has yearned over all, but all have not responded : " Many are called, but few are chosen." The blessed life cannot be poured into hearts closed to it. The mere experience of death, if it cannot exclude, cannot fit men for the Kingdom. Far from the Father shutting out any of His children, it is the children who have refused to enter the open door. He was divinely anxious that all should come in :

" Go into the streets and lanes, the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in *that My house may be filled.*"

Yet, as all cannot have the very same experience within the Kingdom, neither can those who are without have one identical experience. There was no " everlasting punishment " in the old, terrible, God-dishonouring, man-alienating sense of the phrase taught by Christ. " Everlasting " (R.V. " eternal ") " punishment " and " eternal life " in Matt. xxv. ought to be rendered " the punishment of the Age " and " the life of the Age," namely, the Messianic age now being ushered in. There is no doubt that, in the language of the time and place, " Eternal life " meant the life of that age to come, so " Eternal punishment " meant the punishment of that age.[1]

[1] " Its true meaning "—that of *aiōnios*, rendered " Everlasting " and " Eternal "—" as Dalman has shown, is, rather, ' belonging to,' or

Jesus taught that there are *degrees* in punishment. Some are "beaten with many stripes," some with "few." There is a greater and a lesser condemnation. It is implied that there may be forgiveness in "the age to come," for it is said that there is one sin for which there is "no forgiveness either in this age or in that which is to come," but, fortunately, as it stands in the immediate connection, it is one that it is impossible for any of us to commit to-day—saying that Jesus was moved by the Prince of evil spirits instead of by the Holy Spirit of God. As there are gradations of honour and enjoyment in the Kingdom, so are there gradations of suffering and loss outside it.

But is it to be so for ever? In one sense, of course, it will be so as long as fresh individuals in varying moral and spiritual conditions are passing into the unseen world; and it must be so as long as men refuse to yield to the holy love of God. But will individual inner conditions remain *for ever* unchanged—no salvation possible for the "unsaved"? Or, rather, we should ask, Is God to lose multitudes of the children He created for Himself? Are their evil wills to triumph eternally over His good Will for them? It is not so much a question of man's interests as it is of God's. Nor is it one of escaping the penalties of sin; these cannot be *escaped*, although the acceptance of them may become a means of salvation. Shall men be able to resist God for ever, and so *suffer* for ever?

Jesus did not say so. When one asked Him, "Are there few that be saved?" He declined to answer, but urged him to see to it that he made his own salvation sure. And when His disciples heard Him say how

sharing the characteristics of 'the New Order,' the Messianic age" (Dr. J. O. F. Murray, *The Goodness and Severity of God*, p. 63 (Hulsean Lecture). See also *The Teaching of Christ* by the present writer.

hard it was for a rich man to enter the Kingdom, and they asked, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus answered in words which throw open a great door of Hope: "With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible" (Matt. xix. 26); or as in Luke (xviii. 27), "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God." Why should we seek to close that door? How can *we* hope for a salvation which we owe to the Grace of God in Christ while multitudes of others, like human with ourselves, members of a humanity that is *one* before God, its source, are shut out for ever? How could *we* rejoice in a life into which the great mass of our human brethren, with like feelings with ourselves and created for the same destiny, to many of whom we owe all that we are, can never enter? If some are excluded at first, their exclusion is neither arbitrary nor vindictive, but inevitable, and surely, in the hope that it may lead them to realise what they have lost. The "beating with stripes," few or many, has surely a *good* purpose in it — something beyond the "beating." God's creative and redemptive purpose embraces all His human children, and because He *is* God it cannot fail. Did not Jesus liken the seeking love of God to that of the Shepherd who goes forth to seek His *one* lost sheep, and who seeks it "until he find it"?

Shall God do less? Is not a man more to God than a sheep can be to its shepherd? Does not Paul teach that it is God's purpose in Christ to bring back into the unity from which Creation proceeded all that did so proceed—"to reconcile to Himself all things, things in Heaven and things on earth" (Col. i. 20). Has not the Seer recorded the vision and audition granted him: "And *every creature* which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are

in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever" (Rev. v. 13).

If man could resist God for ever, man would be stronger than God, evil would be mightier than goodness. Men are free, and must remain free. But cannot God so influence men that they will freely yield to Him? Many who have long resisted Him are so influenced in this life quite consistently with their freedom. Is not His Love—not mere good nature but one with Reason and Righteousness—Omnipotent, and "able to save to the uttermost"? Can we really believe that God has called into being creatures who can eternally prevail against Him, to their own undoing and the failure of His eternal purpose concerning them? We have, indeed, no definite *Knowledge*, we cannot dogmatise, but the belief that God, our Father revealed in Christ, had in His creation a purpose for all His children which He will see fulfilled in spite of all that seems against it—the belief—

> "That somehow good
> Will be the final goal of ill,
> To pangs of nature, sins of will,
> Defects of doubt, and taints of blood,"

seems the only faith that is worthy of us as God's children. All the good we have experienced, and all that we can hope for, rests on the basis of His Fatherly character. And it is to such a faith that the Gospel of the eternal Kingdom seems to lead us on, past the experience of exclusion in the first instance. For, as we have seen, the very idea of the Kingdom is that of *the ultimate triumph of God*, and we dare not exempt anything from that triumph, which cannot be one of *force*.

It is true that when we think of the innumerable

multitudes of human beings in all conditions of inner and outer life, of the characters that history brings before us, some with self-centred wills of adamant, some even monsters of iniquity ; of the evil, unloving, unscrupulous animal, and sometimes lower than animal, lives ; of the frivolous, trifling, silly, useless lives wilfully lived by many in human form ; or even of the swarming masses neither very bad nor very good, neither fit for heaven nor for hell, the mind is apt to be staggered in the attempt to relate them to the future ; but the work is *not ours but God's.* All have in them the capacity for a higher life, all have some good in them that can be developed ; all have in them something of God. At the foundation of each human life, its very possibility indeed, there is something of God which cannot be lost, and may be kindled into life. The old theologians used to say that the image of God might burn in hell, but could never be destroyed.

It may be asked, Where are we to stop ? What about the higher animals, with gleams in many of them of something of value, wonderful fidelity, deep affection, something of morality in relation to a human master, devotion to such a one that shames ours to God —patient, useful service, oft poorly requited by man. And are there not those in human form not yet wholly human ? What of them ? Some would draw the line at those who have risen to that higher manhood into which Christ came to raise men, those who are in their hearts true sons of God, or in their spirits at one with Him, or who have realised their inner freedom from the power of their lower nature—souls freed from the physical—or, in the language of to-day, who have gained real *value* for God. But is not this a rather earthly and business-like way of regarding the relation of human beings to God ? Consider also how few of

us, comparatively, have attained to such value; how few there are in the world really in full unison with God; how many, not only in heathen lands in ancient and modern times, but in our own times, and even in Christian lands, have never had the true knowledge of God or the opportunity of rising to the higher life, how heavily weighted we all are by primitive and acquired inheritances, how weak our wills, what a burden many have to bear, what a battle to fight; yet all are human, all owe their being to God, all have a value to Him deeper than our eyes can penetrate.

> "All I could never be,
> All men ignored in me,
> This I was worth to God,
> Whose hand the pitcher shaped."

There are spiritual possibilities in all as great as in the greatest saint that ever lived. Shall these never be evoked? Surely He who cares for the sparrows cares for all His human children, not merely for the ninety-and-nine righteous persons, and desires to see the purpose of their creation fulfilled in them all, shall find means for its realisation in us all. Think again how much we owe to these our human brethren, and how unworthy we should show ourselves to be if we could rejoice in our own continued and continually expanding life, content that these should be extinguished for ever! And if *we* feel that we could not be thus content, much less could God whose children they are, with something of Himself in them all. Therefore, if the Divine purpose is not to fail, we must, unless there be some *physical* prohibitory reason, think of the Future life as all-embracing and progressive. As already said, we cannot exalt this into a dogma. There is a natural fear that some might presume upon it to

their own injury and that of others. But fear of hell has not greatly deterred men from working evil, and it is more probable that the worthier thought of God and His loving purpose, as illustrated by the Cross of Christ, will attract men to Him, and make them feel the shame and see the folly of a resistance that can not only grieve and cause cost to the loving Father, with suffering and loss to ourselves, but must succumb at last. It is true that

> "We have but faith, we cannot know."

But is it not also true to say of such a faith—

> "Derives it not from what we have
> The likest God within the soul"?

As regards the higher animals, and any who may not yet have become fully human, we would draw the line at the approach to personality.

Jesus by no means taught that all could immediately enter the Kingdom—quite the contrary; but He offered in God's name the Kingdom to all, and there are millions who have never had the offer made to them. If many who have had the offer made to them have refused it, it does not follow that those who will yet have it made will refuse it. The Christian Ideal that "God shall be all in all" does not surely mean merely in a select Company satisfied with their own salvation, for, most assuredly, that would not be *God* in them. We cannot be true to the Spirit of Christ and yet leave the fate of our human brethren, or the fulfilment of the Father's purpose, out of account, or think of His triumph as reached partly by *force*. It is the poor and harsh thoughts of God in relation to the great mass of His children, entertained by so many, that largely accounts for the persistence of the hardness

and coldness of men in the world towards their fellows. For a man inevitably becomes like the God he worships. If we would see a better world, we must present a not less Holy but a worthier and more attractive view of God. There is a deep sense of what is worthy and really God-like deep seated in the human heart.[1]

WHAT SHALL WE FIND TO DO?

Some are greatly concerned to know what they will find to interest them continuously in the eternal Kingdom, *what they will get to do*, what will save them from ennui. Dr. Percy Gardner remarks in an excellent section on Immortality that "no one has been able to sketch any kind of future life for the individual the prospect of which, extended to infinity, will attract a reasonable man" (*op. cit.* p. 224). Jesus, I think,

[1] Similar views have been maintained by Christian theologians and thinkers, from the days of Origen and of Gregory of Nyssa onward, and are widely represented to-day. For their history (and defence) see Dr. Leckie's *The World to Come*; and for a recent treatment of the subject from a Biblical point of view, Dr. Murray's Hulsean Lecture, *The Goodness and Severity of God*, may be referred to.

From the standpoint of Philosophy reference may be made to the Gifford Lectures of Sir Henry Jones and Dr. Pringle Pattison. The former says: "one genuine failure of the good in any one single life would be a failure of the Divine purpose," which would mean "the entry of contingency and sheer unreason into the Universe." "This religious view of the world-process alone makes the world not a chaos but a cosmos" (see Dr. Pringle Pattison's *The Idea of Immortality*, p. 202, note). With respect to the supposed danger of the belief—admitted were it hardened into a dogma—Dr. Pringle Pattison says: "When the appeal of the Evangelist is made in the name of Goodness itself, the idea of postponement to the future, and of ultimately 'jinking' the consequences, is one which will no longer arise" (p. 205). It may be added that it would be one that would inflict the deepest injury on one's own soul.

did give such a sketch in those parables that represented fidelity to trusts in this present life as leading to the entrusting of greater things to us in the life to come. There will be at the least as much for us to do there as there has been here, as great a field of work for the effective doing of which we are here in training. When we think of the multitudes continually entering the life beyond — many ignorant needing instruction; of the imperfect souls that call for development and perfecting—fitting for the Eternal Kingdom; of the sinful who need saving, surely a great field of work opens before us which our experience here is fitting us to undertake. If we shrink from the thought of the Future, it need not be for fear of unemployment. And there is no limit to the possibilities of the Infinite. Union with the living God necessarily implies constant satisfying activity. God is eternally creative, and those at one with Him will be sharing in His work.

The Kingdom, in fact, is bound to be the sphere of great and manifold interest. For, as Dr. Streeter points out (in *Immortality*), if there is to be progress there must be embodiment. "If embodiment, there will be recognition, and if recognition, there will be, not only friendly intercourse and mutual helpfulness, but perfect love ruling in all hearts." What a prospect it is, that great Family of God! Think of the myriads belonging to it, each one different from all others, each with something of the infinite which another does not possess, but which he can impart. No one unable to confer something on his brother; for *there* will be realised in its completeness that "distribution of the Spirit that is given to profit withal." There will always be something to learn, something to seek to know and do. Instead of ennui, Eternity itself

will be too short for the realisation of all that is possible of interest and mutual service. The practical principle of the Kingdom shall there find its universal fulfilment. The life is in *Eternity*, but we are living in Eternity *now*. Time is but a portion of Eternity measured out to us by movement. And as embodied beings, living and acting as such, life will still be (as Dr. Streeter also argues) in some real sense in both Time and Space. Space and Time are the inevitable conditions of embodied existence even in " spiritual bodies."

THE VALUE OF MAN

In addition to what has been said, one aspect of the uplifting influence of Christ's Gospel of the Future is important because of the value that would be seen to belong to man as a son of God and heir of Eternity. Our civilisation, it is widely felt, is in danger of sharing the fate of the great civilisations of the past, unless a new spirit comes to dominate it. What was the main cause of the decay of these old civilisations? They were devoting themselves to that which was external merely, not to that which belonged to the real life of man. They were Towers of Babel built up without any regard to God or to man as the central object of the creation. *As men*, the Builders manifestly crowned the creation, and they ought to have thought of others as being equally men with the same claims as they put forth for themselves. We marvel at the wonderful works belonging to these old civilisations, but how were the millions of those who wrought them regarded? They were, for the most part, slaves, despised and tyrannised over by their fellow-men who had gained the power over them. Hence conquest

after conquest by nations who were as yet stronger, till these in their turn shared the same fate. They had devoted themselves to everything *except the one essential thing* even for their own maintenance, and when it came to the point they might have large armies, but they lacked *men*. It may be said that ancient Egypt in particular had great interest in a future life; but it was not a real but a shadow life, such as could not really satisfy any one, and, although it was to some extent moralised, the most enviable positions in it were monopolised by their Pharaohs and other great ones. We may find Tutankhamen, and marvel at the wonderful works his tomb reveals; but where shall we look for the millions of workers, equally *men* before God? That man has failed to care for his fellows, *as fellow-men* has been the inexcusable sin and the deepest reason of national decay. Everything has advanced, except the one thing God created the world for—*man as His child*.

PRACTICAL IMPORTANCE OF THE SUBJECT OF FUTURE DESTINY

This subject of future destiny is not one for mere cold philosophical or theological discussion; it touches the deepest feelings of the heart that God has given us, and loyalty to our humanity. Those who have witnessed extreme human suffering, whether amid the horrors of the battlefield or in the peaceful home, or have had their loved ones ruthlessly cut down in their prime; or have sought in vain to comfort mothers bereaved in quite ordinary circumstances, if no assurance can be given them of a life beyond; or who have pleaded with and prayed for loved ones gone astray—

but all in vain; who have seen, perhaps, a life rich in promise become a moral and spiritual wreck, know how practical a subject it is, and how vital to real faith in God and to the Christian spirit and life.

We can be content not to know particulars or even possibilities of survival, if only we may have some sure word in which we can trust. It is such a word that we have in Christ, whose very Gospel to men was the assurance of perfect Good in that which He termed the Kingdom of God, based on the reality of God as the Father of men, whose good purpose we can trust. It was the life of this Kingdom that Jesus promised to men as "Eternal Life." We cannot think of the Kingdom, or eternal life—for they are the same thing—exactly as He—as a child of His time and race thought of it; but if we take the promise of the Future out of His Gospel we completely change it into "another gospel which is not another." And, as we have seen, had the Kingdom come when and as He seems to have looked for it, it would have been something infinitely smaller than it is in the purpose of God, Whose infinite love sets no limit to the number of His children.[1]

THE VALUE OF THE GOSPEL FOR THIS WORLD

Or think of ourselves to-day. Had the counsels of Jesus been followed would we not have had a very different experience in the past, and a very much better world for all in the present? Confining our thoughts

[1] At the same time, the propagation of the race is largely committed to man, and, while God cares for all who are brought into existence, it is for man not merely to obey his animal instincts, but to act rationally.

to Europe since the appearance of Christ, and allowing for time for His principles to be known and in a reasonable measure embraced—in the measure in which they might well have been embraced—and supposing them to have been maintained as they might have been, would not European history have been very different? For one thing, we should have had few or none of the fratricidal wars which disfigure the record, less of the oppressions under which men have suffered, and none of the religious persecutions and massacres which are darkest of all. These would have been absolutely impossible had it really been Christ or the God and Father of Christ that men believed in. The late terrible war with its slain millions, and millions more of sufferers in various forms, and its aftermath of misery, immorality, and crime, could never have happened. And it is only as the principles of Christ are embraced in earnest, the God and Father whom He declared, loved, and obeyed, and man, however poor, humble, and even unworthy, regarded as God's child, destined for His eternal Kingdom and perfected Family, that there is any real hope for the world.

It ought to be manifest that, if what Jesus declared and manifested represents the Divine creative Idea, men and women by responding to the call of Christ will be not only doing the best for themselves, but also for the world in which they live. If God has a purpose in the creation, only those who conform to that purpose are living according to the Mind and Will of the Creator, and it is only as the human purpose becomes one with the Divine that it can be well with the world. Besides, as has been seen, the realisation of the Divine purpose depends on the seeking of such a character, founded in supreme devotion to God and love for our fellow-men, finding expression in mutual service and

all righteousness, as will ensure in the world the operation of those principles which all acknowledge to be those that alone can bless men in the present world. While this world can never cease to be preparatory, there are many evils that might be removed, much unnecessary suffering, want, and repression, which cannot be according to the mind of God, but is the consequence of man's failure to enter into that Mind. God acts in the world through men and women as His instruments, and the more completely the Mind and Will of men are one with the Mind and Will of God, the more effective will the Divine action be. We pray to God to do this or that for His children, but surely He cares for them *more* than we can do ; but He lacks instruments through whom He can act. We should never forget that Jesus said His Gospel was specially one for *the poor*. A proof of His mission as being from God was that " the poor have the Gospel preached to them."

And, further, is it not when we *seriously* regard our fellow-men as children of God, and souls destined for an immortal life, that we shall estimate them at their true value and treat them as we ought ? If we look upon our human brothers and sisters as belonging alike to a higher order than the earthly, the children of the one all-just and eternal Father, with like feelings and the same fundamental faculties, and exposed to the same judgement in view of their future destiny as ourselves, all accidental distinctions will be subordinated and corresponding action follow. Where that belief is awanting, and men and women regarded only as creatures of Time, or in their earthly relationships merely, the outcome may be that which was seen in France in the days of the Revolution, and more recently in appalling horror in Russia. " When they

say peace and safety, then sudden destruction is upon them." The alternative to faith in God and regard for man as His child is Bolshevism.

Thus that which may seem at first sight to be the chief objection to the Call of Christ to seek *first* the things of the unseen and eternal world, namely, that men would be led to take too little interest in the present world and the well-being of their fellow-men therein, has no real foundation. It is all the other way. Of course, there may be—as there have always been—some who are so other-worldly as to ignore the interests of the present world; but these are forgetting the essential conditions emphasised by Christ of entrance into the Future Kingdom. It was because these were forgotten that the other world exercised in the past not a good, but an evil influence. This present world is meant to be the scene of the birth and life of the children of God, and the sphere of those actions which develop our character and make us fit or unfit for the Kingdom Eternal. The body is that which makes individual life possible. But it and the external world are only *means* to an ulterior and intended end, and our relation to them is only right when they are regarded and treated as means, not when they are made ends, or our primary concern. *Man* as personal spirit, as a child of God, and not only an end in himself, but the *end of the creation*, ought to be the primary concern of all, and the world so ordered as to minister to this supreme end. Otherwise, we are following a way of our own, not that of God, the result of which cannot be good, but is the real source of our individual as well as our national and international troubles.

THE NEW CHRISTIAN INTEREST IN EARTHLY CONDITIONS

Reference has already been made to the new interest on the part of the Church and of Christians in general, in what affects men in their earthly relations, and to some extent a new interest in the animal creation. This is, of course, praiseworthy. Yet the revived interests in social matters has not attracted many to the Church. While ready to accept any help the Church may give towards the improvement of material conditions, there has been an increasing indifference to religion. Evidently something has been awanting—not material but spiritual. Men have not been made to feel that they are created with natures and for a destiny far transcending all that this world can give them, or the felicity that improved conditions can bestow. The things of the higher and future life seem to be quite forgotten. Only the material and present are kept in view. While it is right and necessary to seek just wages and proper conditions of life for all, man, as created by and for God, needs far more than what ministers to earthly life and felicity. And what myriads can never share in the earthly good. How those who seek this for themselves and for those who may come after them can look forward to enjoyment of it, *while wholly forgetting those who went before them, who can never enjoy those improved conditions,* is astonishing. It indicates the power of that inherent selfishness of man, which is the deepest source of all evils, and from which God in Christ would fain save us. Jesus viewed men as having a value in themselves far above all that is animal and earthly. It was this conviction that underlay His preaching of the Future

Kingdom, rightly understood, His self-sacrificing seeking of men as the children of God, and His exhortations to see to it that we do not come short of that which God has made possible for us as His children. That this is open to all, without exception, who will only turn to God and seek it, was the gospel that He preached. Can there be a better gospel for the world ?

It was as a gospel of the Future that Christianity was first preached to the world. As such it fell in with and met the deep craving in many hearts for assurance of Immortality as evidenced by the widespread resort to the " Mysteries," bringing with it a new moral and spiritual salutary influence. This no doubt largely helped to its success. If interest in a future life has died out amongst ourselves, there is small hope for us. But that it has not wholly done so is evidenced by the interest in Psychical Research and the resort to Spiritualism and other forms of the Occult. Christ's gospel, rightly conceived, might surely meet the need more effectually than mediumistic séances can do. But, of course, it is not to meet this craving merely that Christianity exists. The aim of Jesus in His gospel was to bring God's lost and wandering children home to their Father, to raise them to their true life as His sons and daughters in this world, and to its fulness and perfection in the world to come. When once we have found God (or have been found of Him) all anxiety about the Future ceases. We have come *home,* and our home in God is eternal.

We greatly need to revert to Christ's gospel of the eternal Kingdom, to His call to men and His conception and presentation of religion as consisting simply in devotion to God and His will both actively and passively. We need to realise that God is not afar off, to be sought and found for us by philosophers, but in His spiritual

Presence near, even unto such as are "babes," around and within us ever, to be certainly found by faith and in the experience of turning to Him in our hearts. The most casual reading of the Gospels will show us the characteristic features of those who, believing the gospel, and responding to Christ's Call became members of the Kingdom. (1) They turned in their hearts to God and trusted Him to forgive them; (2) they preferred the Future to the present, the inward to the outward life, God to self and the world. This made them members of the Kingdom of God, citizens of Heaven, while living here on the earth—their one concern was to be true to that citizenship. This is Christianity with the salt in it.

THE CHURCHES

We have heard much of late about "the failure of the Churches." But, judged by their accepted standards, the Churches have not failed; they have been, in recent years especially, very much in earnest, and could not have done more than they have done. But the Church, as a whole, and *as a Church*, has failed even to attempt to realise the Ideal of Jesus for His "community"—*to represent in and to the world the life of the Kingdom*, and so win men for it. It needs to be awakened to this its real "high calling." We may not accept all that Dr. Gore says concerning the Church, but he states truly its primary purpose in the mind of Christ as being "to represent the Kingdom of God in the world, that is, to exhibit such a type of human life, individual and social, as should both glorify God and be a moral attraction to mankind." Yet he has to say: "The Church has strangely

forgotten its function to establish a visible example of the Kingdom of God here and now in the world. The record of the Church in our own country is in many respects an honourable record; but in many respects it has been startlingly deficient" (*The Holy Spirit and the Church*, pp. 285, 349). "There is greatly needed," he holds, "an ethical revival in thorough loyalty to the ethical teaching of Christ, to re-erect the ethical standard of Christianity" (p. 350).

Now, the ethical teaching of Christ was based on that conception of the relation of man to God which we have seen, and it is only in ethical life that that relation can find expression. An ethical revival in the Church would follow if its members *manifestly* sought *first* the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, as Jesus urged men to do, and realised practically that the *primary* function of the Church is to make its own the life of the Kingdom and represent it in the world. "No doubt," as Dr. Gore remarks with reference to his own suggestion, "such a fundamental ethical reform in the Church's teaching would be very unpopular in many directions. It would encounter many prejudices. It would alarm many vested interests" (*The Holy Spirit in the Church*, p. 350).

What an attempt to realise Christ's Ideal in the Church might lead to, were it seriously adopted, no one can foretell. But there is every reason to agree with Dr. Gore when he says: "But I feel certain of one thing, that it and it alone would attract and win a great body of men and women, such as would have been the followers of Jesus of Nazareth." And if this be indeed the Divine Ideal (and it was clearly that of Christ), the result could only be good, and no personal considerations ought to be allowed to come between us and the attempt. We must show by our individual

and our corporate action that *with us* the Kingdom of God that Christ proclaimed is *first*. The symbol of our religion is still the Cross : " If any man will be My disciple he must deny himself and take up his own cross and follow Me." It is *the life* that tells, the life of God in men. If Christ's thought of the Church were realised, then the Church would be seen to be in truth the " habitation of God in the Spirit," " the body of Christ " in the world.[1]

[1] The eminent psychologist, Dr. James Ward (who has passed away since this was written), concludes an interesting and welcome paper in the current number of the *Hibbert Journal* (January 1925), by saying : " To regard this life — not as intrinsically valuable in itself, but as merely a means to some final perfection ever beyond and yet constantly to be pursued, would, it seems to me, reduce eternal life for God and man alike to nothing better than an endless mirage." This is certainly true. But, as Dr. Ward also holds that Eternal life (which he prefers to take in its Greek signification) is not only a present reality, but has its fruition in the future, one must ask, What is it that really gives its ultimate value to the present life, if it be not its relation to an eternal Future ? To regard this world as final with nothing beyond it, would be to deny it any real or ultimate value at all. It is what can be realised in it and come out of it that gives this present life its value. To confine our interests to it is the way to miss the gaining of the real and permanent values. Eternal life (whether we take it in its Hebrew or its Greek meaning) is certainly something to be entered on and developed *here* ; but it *is* the eternal life in us, not that of the world merely, and it cannot find its development cut off from relation to its ultimate fruition. I have sought to show that we cannot live for the eternal without at the same time living in the most effective way for the present world, if we take up life as Christ calls to it.

XI

A FUTURE LIFE FOR ALL

CHAPTER XI

A FUTURE LIFE FOR ALL

SINCE according to Christ the realisation of man's destiny is to be found only in a life beyond the present, the question of the grounds of belief in a future life come up for consideration. Is survival of bodily death possible for personalities? Apart from faith in the survival of Jesus, have we any good reason for believing in it? Has any ordinary mortal ever manifested himself as alive after death, or come back so as to give us assurance of a life beyond? Some amongst us believe that in more ways than one has this been done. But is the evidence such as would stand cross-examination by a competent Counsel in a Law Court? (This is Lord Haldane's requirement.) Have not some who once believed it been bitterly disappointed? Individuals may have experiences which convince them, but these cannot be communicated to others. We may read thousands of pages of such experiences, and we cannot refute them, but they carry no permanent conviction. And, have we ever had any such communications as would make the life beyond worthy of God, or desirable by man as His child?

Personally, I have twice attended a Séance in a Circle, which had published volumes of "communications," and where I was allowed to put testing questions to a spirit supposed to be communicating; but each time was put off in an identical manner by being told that I was "a medium myself" and did not need to

ask questions. The second occasion happening at a considerable interval from the first, probably the answer that had been given me before had been forgotten. Again, in a reply to my statement in a former publication that I had got no satisfaction from Spiritualism, I was assured by the representative of a "powerful circle" that they could give me satisfaction. The offer was no doubt made in good faith. But although they were given a test question to put to one who had agreed that, if possible and right, communication would be attempted, after months of trial there was no result. So that, although one cannot speak dogmatically, especially when we think of the eminent men who have believed in it, and of those still advocating it, I fear we cannot look for much from Spiritualism.

At the same time, faculties in man have been brought to light which prove that he has a spiritual nature—such as the direct communication of mind with mind; the fact that as a spiritual being man is not confined to his body—certain experiences also that suggest possible forms of action of the spirit apart from its normal relation to the body; telepathy, hypnotism, clairvoyance, etc. We do not really know what happens at death; and the capacities of the ether, or something answering to it, are being always more fully revealed. Many Christians also believe that they can have *spiritual* communion with Christ, and even with the friends who have passed away from this world; a truly spiritual Spiritualism is possible, and, were this more generally practised, there would be less need for Spiritualism and more confidence in a life beyond.

The Spiritual is, of course, invisible. We cannot have, and are not meant to have, the same assurance

as is open to us with respect to physical objects. It is essentially a matter for *faith*, for which, had we certainty, there would be no room. It is, I think, a *testing* belief in our relation to God and the Universe. And, as has been often said, were the world beyond as open to us as this one is, the highest qualities of character could not be ours, and an other-worldliness would prevail comparable to the this-worldliness that we deplore, and one that would defeat itself.

But our faith must have rational ground to spring from. We do not require to prove to men the reality of survival before we can address to them the Call of Christ, but can assume it as the natural, instinctive, inherited, almost universal, belief of men in general, from the earliest historical time onward—a belief, indeed, which stands or falls with belief in God, and the rationality of the universe, one, apart from which there would be no rational meaning discernible in human life with its experiences, no goal for the individual life, no ultimate significance in creation, a faith also that is supported by the experiences of the disciples of Christ after His death. Yet in these days when Science has deepened our thoughts and made us "prove all things" where possible, some will quite naturally ask whether we have good ground on which to rest our confidence in personal survival of bodily death. Above all, they will ask—*What does Science say?*

The relation of Science to-day to this subject of Future Life is very different from what was some years ago when Materialism seemed to threaten to sweep the field. Some of its representatives then made bold to deny, or at least to cast serious doubt on, the possibility of human survival. The mind seemed to depend so entirely on the Brain, that when the Brain

perished, the Mind perished also. But they omitted to ask with sufficient penetration the crucial question, *Whence came this marvellous Brain?* What formed it? Was there not *Mind* in some effective form before there could be Brain? Recent study has established the fact that Mind exists and acts in other forms than that known to us in our consciousness. The so-called "Unconscious Mind" has come to occupy an important place in our Science. But although normally beyond the threshold of our consciousness, it is not necessarily unconscious—"super-conscious" might possibly describe it more truly. Most assuredly the Brain did not make itself. It is there to serve that which is not material but spiritual, even our spiritual self. We are now coming to see that Mind was before Brain; that it was Mind that formed the Brain. Not merely Mind as being first in the creation as a whole, but first in each particular organism; if not yet Mind as we have come to know it in our conscious selves, still that which was *mental*, or *spiritual*, as distinguished from material. Not Mind with a consciousness like ours, yet *Mind* as the ideal and formative power of the organism, or that "principle of organic unity" which governs the entire development. In obedience to this—in order to serve the wants of the creature, however humble, in its inner self—the entire organism is formed. This inner self is not a material thing, but is spiritual. Although belonging at first to "the unconscious" or "wider Consciousness" or "Mind-life," it comes to appear in us as a conscious self or soul, and it is in order to fulfil functions necessary for its life, and increasingly fuller life, that the bodily organs, including the Brain, are gradually formed. The Ideal or formative principle was not there as something that could

be *seen*, except as it found expression, but that it was there effectively is manifested by that which was produced. It was more than a " vital principle "—a *spiritual* principle.[1]

Although this principle was materially expressed in the germinal matter of the organism, it was there as a spiritual inheritance from preceding forms, and its presence, so expressed, determined what the ultimate product should be—whether a mouse, or an eagle, an ox, or a man or woman, each with individual characteristics. It was something quite invisible, but very real, that in each instance, determined what should be formed, something of *Mind*, just as truly as it is Mind in man that determines his productions and gradually works them out. To minister to a foreseen, fore-felt, and fore-provided-for *want* of the creature each organ was successively formed. The function (the idea of it) is always before the organ that comes to fulfil it. This same formative mental Reality finds increasing expression in and by means of the body, and ultimately appears as " the soul," the central self or principle of each living creature of the higher orders of life. Here it is in us as partly conscious and partly unconscious —sometimes the one and sometimes the other, sometimes both together — the conscious and the " unconscious Mind "—and to mind in its subliminal form the most remarkable powers have been attributed. It is a well-known fact that even after birth the Brain continues to be built up by *the self* according as it is exercised, even according to whether the right or the left hand is used. The influence of Mind on body is

[1] Instinct may be taken as an example of the " Unconscious " yet active mental. Whatever relation Instinct may have to the material, in itself it is not material but spiritual; it is *feeling*, not yet come into consciousness, but which may come into consciousness, *e.g.* as *desire*.

being increasingly observed and utilised. Its extraordinary power is impressively seen in Hypnotism and Therapeutics.[1]

Each person in his central self is spiritual, not material. In Lord Haldane's words, "We are greater than we know; the self is not the organism." Sir Oliver Lodge has long been telling us that we are never confined within our bodies: we cannot be so. If the Mind be before the body, why should it terminate with the body? All that is material is there only to serve the spiritual, and it seems incredible that when the material organ of service fails us, as anything material must sometime do, that which it has served fails also. That would be a strange arrangement. It is certain that *the spiritual survives in some form*, as does even the material of the organism, and if the self has formed itself into a Personality, as that personality it survives. If a body is necessary for expression, or for the regaining of individual consciousness, it is possible that it will find one for itself; for matter is not the hard thing we can see and touch, but in its essence ethereal and invisible, and the ether is all-pervasive and practically omnipresent. Even *now*, the Mind may have an ethereal medium; if the ether surrounds each atom

[1] "There is, of course, no point at which we can say that the life exists apart from its material substratum, but it is equally true to say that the development of the body has been built up by and is the result of the initiative, activity, and dominance of the life-principle within it" (B. H. Streeter, *op. cit.* p. 107).

"The organism in commerce with the environment is the medium in which the soul comes into being; and because the organism is a material body derived from the parents, there are represented in its spiritual product all the influences summarised under the head of heredity" (Dr. A. Seth Pringle Pattison in *The Idea of Immortality*, p. 71).

Dr. W. M'Dougall holds that the Soul and the Body are distinct, and that the Soul can survive (*Body and Mind*).

of matter and actually constitutes it, as we are assured it does, an ethereal form may already belong to the personality. We do not even know how far the "material" body perishes, and we do know for certain that its constituents do not perish. As St. Paul wrote, "there is a natural and there is a spiritual body," and although in that saying he was referring to the spirit in the Christian sense, there is in every man a life which is that of the spirit of the man rather than that of the animal soul.[1]

For future life we no doubt require consciousness and memory. But both consciousness and memory are *spiritual*, not material, although both have in this life a relation to the brain. Memory extends (if we may use a spatial term) far farther and deeper than the material brain. It is in *the Mind* that memories are stored, although the brain enables us to recall them—to *re*-collect them. Our memories are there, in the depths of the "unconscious mind," and there may even be pre-natal memories such as give colour to the idea of reincarnation. When we forget a word or a name we are aware that we know it all the time, that it is somewhere within us, and the healthy brain

[1] As W. R. Bousfield writes in the *Hibbert Journal* for April 1924: "Matter which seems to us so solid and impenetrable is in reality but an open network. The atom with its nucleus and its shell of electrons is an open structure, like the solar system, with its central sun and revolving planets. This 'too, too solid flesh' only occupies a fraction of the space it appears to occupy. It is but a 'rose-mesh.' The protons and electrons of which it is formed are really far asunder, bathed, we may suppose, in the ether, which penetrates them freely. The possibility of some kind of ethereal body linked with this material body and escaping from it at death is clear. Our senses can perceive only material bodies, and leave open the question whether an ethereal vehicle, withdrawn at death, may not carry on the mind and personality of the man. Only the idea that the human mind requires as its vehicle or organ a material brain stands in the way of belief in survival."

can enable us to bring it again into the light of consciousness. We then know it to be what we had in our mind all the time and were seeking to have brought into consciousness. But it was not the material brain that stored it. How can a material brain of ever so many million cells—ninety millions it is said—take in, retain, and give up again the pictures of the multitudes of persons we have met or of places we have visited, or of scenes we have witnessed or had described to us? How can it take in the *meanings* of what we have heard or read, while the *words* may be wholly forgotten? How can a brain formed of common matter think, deliberate, choose, will, love, and hate, imagine, and execute? In that case a brain that could be held in our hand would represent the person. Where is the deep "unconscious self" located in relation to the brain? It is *I* as a conscious spiritual person that feels, thinks, wills, and acts, loves, and hates, whatever service my brain may render *me* in these exercises. And it is not the *body* of my friend I love but the spiritual person; when the body no longer serves him he can no longer manifest himself to me, but can I believe that he, as the spiritual personality he was, has perished?

All the while he was with me, he, the spiritual person, was wholly invisible; he belonged to a spiritual world:

> "We are spirits clad in veils,
> Man by man was never seen,
> All our deep communing fails
> To remove the shadowy screen."

Bergson—who, it will be admitted, has some knowledge of both Science and Philosophy, affirms that "the aspirations of our moral nature are not in the least contradicted by positive Science." He holds that

the Mind "overflows the body on all sides; cerebral activity responds only to a very small part of mental activity"; "the body is used by the mind, they are not inseparably united." "If the mental life overflows the cerebral," he says, "if the brain does but translate into movements a small part of what takes place in consciousness, then survival becomes so probable that the onus of proof falls on him who denies it." The soul is creative. "There is infinitely more in a human consciousness than there is in the corresponding brain." *Memory*, he maintains, is the foundation of consciousness. It belongs not to the brain but to the Mind. Impressions are not made on the brain (this is impossible), but *on the Mind*. The brain serves to recall the recollection, not to store it. Memories are in the Mind; our whole past still exists subconsciously. "The brain," he says, "is, strictly speaking, neither an organ of thought, nor of feeling, nor of consciousness, but it keeps consciousness, feeling, and thought tensely strained on life, and consequently makes them capable of efficacious action." "It is also a veil or barrier of the past." "Thus, through a slight modification of the cerebral substance the whole mind may be affected—the reasoning may be correct, but it is out of relation to reality." He sums up his conclusion thus: "If we now take into account that the mental activity of man overflows his cerebral activity, that his brain is a structure of motor habits, but not of memories, that the other functions of thought are even more independent of the brain than memory is, that preservation and even intensification of personality are not only possible but even probable after the disintegration of the body, shall we not suspect that, in its passage through the matter which it finds here, consciousness is tempering itself like steel and preparing

itself for a more efficient action, for an intenser life?" (*Mind Energy*, Lecture I., p. 27, etc., II., p. 59, etc.).

The foregoing may be enough to show that our more recent Science, instead of denying the possibility of survival, may find reason to maintain not only its possibility, but its probability. And if the idea of the brain as being, *inter alia*, a veil or barrier to shut off the innumerable memories within, which would otherwise distract and confuse us, is correct, may it not also serve as a barrier to hide from us now a wider spiritual world which may open to our consciousness when the barrier falls? There *is* a wider consciousness than our limited individual consciousness, a super-consciousness, that of God, who Jesus taught is the spiritual environment of our life, the Creative, all-conditioning consciousness. It does not arise as our finite consciousness does, but is Eternal. Into conscious relation to this wider consciousness we come when we die, and we find ourselves as we have in life related ourselves to it.

Concerning Personality and its survival many questions may be raised. These are discussed from a philosophical point of view by Professor Laird in his recent book, entitled *The Idea of the Soul*. "Souls," he concludes, "if they are worth the making, are also worth the keeping, and the Universe would fail in its duty if it did not preserve them. If this be so, by far the most reasonable conclusion is the continuance of individual persons" (p. 186).

While it is faith in God's regard for His human children as declared by Christ and manifested in Him that is the deepest ground of our Hope, it is necessary to show that our faith is more than a mere wilful confidence in what we wish, or without reason to rest on. What has been said may not be proof; it

may not be convincing, but it shows at least that, as M. Bergson says, in the light of the most recent Science, survival may be regarded as probable, and that " the onus of proof falls on those who deny." [1]

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

Belief in survival is strengthened by the fact of the " resurrection " of Jesus if He be regarded as " the first-born of many brethren." But the full value of this has been lost by the way in which He has been taken wholly out of Humanity, and also by the way in which His rising from the dead came to be thought of. Not merely the body of Jesus but *Jesus Himself* has been supposed to have been put into the tomb—a thing we do not imagine for our friends when they die—and that, after lying for part of three days *dead* in the sepulchre He rose (or was raised) from the dead on the third day. It would be thus in keeping with Jewish beliefs of the time, that it was through the resurrection of the *body* that the dead *Person* rose. But the Person of Christ was *spiritual* (as all persons are), not to say, Divine, not material. The spiritual Person that Jesus was could not die as the body did, and could not be put into any tomb, only the dead *body*. As we read in the Gospel, it was " *the body of Jesus* " that was placed in the tomb. If Socrates could say, " You can bury me if you can catch me," so surely and much more could Jesus ! According to one of the Gospels, He told where He was going after death : To the dying robber He said, " *This day*

[1] " Our destiny is, that from the undeveloped soul from which we started we shall become ever more differentiated and more spiritual, in touch with the Infinite, knowing and loving God " (Dr. J. A. Hadfield in *Immortality*, p. 74).

shalt thou be with me *in Paradise*—He could not be in Paradise and in the sepulchre at the same time—and His last words were, " Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit "—His real inner self. According to the Fourth Gospel, He told His disciples that He was going to the Father to prepare a place for them ; that the death He should pass through should be His glorification. To make His rising depend on the resurrection or the revival of His *body* is sheer materialism, and were our hope to be founded on the rising from the tomb of one whose body " never saw corruption " (as our bodies must do), it would be based on a foundation less secure than sand. Many questions have been raised concerning the resurrection and continued life of Christ. But however these may be decided, can any one seriously believe that the treachery of Judas and the bigoted enmity of the unscrupulous Enemies of Jesus could bring that great and noble life of His *to an end*, not only put Him to death but extinguish His personality ? Christ's resurrection, however, is only a ground of hope for our life after death if we see it to be the survival of the spiritual Person that Jesus was and is. So regarded and taken in connection with the experience of His disciples, to whom He was able to manifest Himself ; above all, with their spiritual experience of Communion with Christ, it gives us confidence ; it enables us to take to our hearts the assurance : " In My Father's House there are many mansions (resting places) : I go to prepare a place for you—because I live, ye shall live also."

NEED FOR FAITH

There would be no profit in speculating more minutely on the nature and experiences of the Life

beyond or in trying to picture it on either side. Jesus has given us no particulars, and it is impossible for us who think and imagine in terms of space, who can only picture reality to ourselves in material forms, and who possess only a created and limited consciousness in material bodies, to reach any clear conceptions of Life in the spiritual world. We must be content if we see reason to believe in it, and trust ourselves and all others in the hands of an all-wise, all-just and all-good Father, who has brought us so far on our way towards fuller life, confident that He will not let His work fall back into nothingness, but will complete it, and do for all that which He in His unerring wisdom and love sees to be best.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I would again emphasise the importance of this Faith for the present world's deepest need. What is wanted above all things to-day is a revival of the religion of *Christ Himself*—Son of God and Son of Man—the religion to which He called all men and gave His life to win us for—His faith in God as His Father and devotion to men as created to be sons of God and the inheritors of His eternal Kingdom. While this means all that is Just and Good and Worthy in this present life, we need to realise that we have this present life given us with a view to a life beyond on which we enter as we fashion ourselves, that the present life is probationary and preparatory, and the eternal of greater consequence than the temporal, that no man can evade a judgement according to what he is and does. We need to see at the same time that this is not something to darken life. On the contrary,

it is only in this light that life can have an ultimate meaning and real value for God and ourselves. Judgement, a friend reminds me, is really just " the registration of values." Instead of aught that would darken life, we need a new Optimism if the world is to be uplifted, a renewal of the glad faith and hope in God ; of the early Christian joy in believing, seeing beyond the clouds that gather to darken the earthly sky the sunshine of eternal day, and beyond the gloom of the death that is inevitable to beings of flesh and blood, but necessary for the increase of life on earth (apart from which not one of us would have been here to-day), the vision of a richer and fuller life. Such a renewal of faith in the Heavenly Father would also bring a renewal of the Christian feeling of brotherhood, so that we should recognise in each man and woman, high or low, learned or ignorant, a son or daughter of the one great Father, our brother or sister, to be treated as members of the one great Family of God. Such a faith in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, manifested in His loving life and self-sacrificing death, would do more to uplift the world than any amount of clamour, or even of merely earth-born endeavour, too apt to look on men as being merely members of a perishing world.

It is absolutely necessary for us, as the children and instruments of God, to remove, as far as we can, all unjust conditions and all removable evils from the present life, and to make this world a Kingdom of God as far as may be. But, as we have seen, it would only be the merest fraction of Humanity that could enjoy the betterment, and that only for a time. This earth will never be a perfect world ; it is not meant to be such ; it must always retain its character as preparatory to one yet to be revealed, as Jesus said,

but which in its essential character may be at all times very "nigh," and be open to our inner vision when our eyes close to this earthly scene.

Christianity has done much for men, but had it been truer to Christ, its "one Teacher" and "Lord," it would have done much more. Having got away from Him, it has found from time to time renewal and advance by in some measure returning to Him, but it has not yet, as a whole, returned to Him fully in His grand simplicity as the Revealer of God and man, and trusted itself to His Spirit in the preaching of the "gospel of God" that He preached, and in living in the world that life of the Kingdom He called men to. Till *Christ alone* rules in His Kingdom the world cannot be saved. This will be the real "Second Coming" of Christ.

This world has in all probability millions of years yet to run, during which it may be hoped that men and women will grow in interest in their Creator as well as in His marvellous works, of the knowledge of which we are only as yet, after all our advances, on the threshold. It is to be hoped also that interest in our fellow-men will increase, realising that man is the crown of God's working, destined to be God's son, and that before God our Humanity is *one*. We may yet see a more complete representation of the Kingdom of Christ on this earth than what seems likely at present, although only preparatory to the eternal Kingdom. But this can only be reached by men responding to the Call of Christ to become citizens of the Heavenly country, and live as the sons of God in the world. And then *Eternity*. Eternity! Who, it is asked, can bear the thought of an endless life? On the other hand, who can entertain the thought of an *end*?—of the complete ceasing to be of all who are and of all that is, and the

utter oblivion of all that has ever been ? No one can. Perhaps our greatest problem arises here in view of the eternity of the life beyond. But it is one which it is utterly useless for us to attempt to grapple with, if we would preserve our sanity. As creatures of Time we cannot realise what it must mean to exist eternally, any more than we can presently see the face of God and live. But as the children of God, " created in the image of His own eternity," we are destined for life in it, and since it is that in which God Himself lives, we must trust Him to make it, in His own way, good for us also. We have seen, however, that most probably *Time* will be an element in the life beyond, and for anything we know to the contrary there may be " breaks " in it for finite beings. It is that life in God which Jesus has entered on in our name and as " our forerunner," the " life everlasting " ; and, surely, as the gospel of the Kingdom urges, it is only rational that we should seek to prepare ourselves for it. We take our life—given, we have every reason to believe, at cost to God—far too lightly and far too meanly, with no conception of its infinite possibilities. We greatly need that the " powers of the world to come " should be brought to bear upon us ; for we are created with a view to that world, not merely for one that " passes away with the desires thereof." If we are viewing our life and destiny wrongly our experience cannot be that which God meant it to be : it cannot be " well with the world."

The outcome of it all is this : that God is Love ; to live in Love is to live in God and to have God living in us. As Love He was manifested in Jesus Christ ; in His Love He gave us being and cares for His children, and has made Eternal provision for them. He is " the Love that will not let us go." " Love never faileth."

The life of Love is the Eternal Life, and it is this Life in it that can uplift and save this present world.

"I say to thee do thou repeat
To the first man thou mayest meet
In lane, highway or open street,

That he and we and all men move
Under a canopy of love,
As broad as the blue sky above;

That doubt and trouble, fear and pain
And anguish, all are shadows vain,
That death itself shall not remain;

That weary deserts we may tread,
A dreary labyrinth may thread,
Through dark ways underground be led;

Yet, if we will one Guide obey,
The dreariest path, the darkest way
Shall issue out in heavenly day;

And we, on divers shores now cast,
Shall meet, our perilous voyage past,
All in our Father's house at last."

ARCHBISHOP TRENCH.

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